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From painting by F. Cotes, R.A.

MARIA GUNNING, COUNTESS OF COVENTRY.

Notable Irishwomen

By C. J. Hamilton

Author of "A Flash of Youth," "Women Writers: Their Works and Ways."

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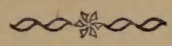

To

Her Excellency the Countess of Dudley,

who has taken

such a Keen and Practical Interest in the

Progress of Irishwomen,

this Book is, with kind permission,

Respectfully Dedicated.

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PREFACE.

THESE articles on "Notable Irishwomen" originally appeared serially, and attracted so much attention that it has been considered advisable to reproduce them in a complete form.

The list is by no means an exhaustive one: many notable lives still remain to be chronicled, more especially those of Margaret Stokes, the well known writer on antiquarian subjects, Mrs. Hungerford and Mrs. Alexander (Hector), the popular novelists, Augusta Holmes, the musician and composer, and "Ethna Carbery," that sweet Irish singer, whose loss we still deplore. But the lives that are given in this volume will abundantly show that during the transition period from the middle of the eighteenth to almost the end of the nineteenth century, Irishwomen have exercised a potent and, on the whole, a beneficent influence on society, on the stage, on the concert-room, as well as on the peaceful realms of literature.

It may be well to add that this book is not

only compiled by an Irishwoman, but is also published, printed and illustrated in Dublin.

For dates, the "Dictionary of National Biography" has been mainly consulted, and also that excellent work, "Webb's Compendium of Irish Biography," Other authorities are Walpole's "Diary and Correspondence," E. Owen Blackburne's "Illustrious Irishwomen," Lord Dufferin's Memoir of his mother, Frances Gerard's "Some Celebrated Beauties of the Eighteenth Century," Mr. Percy Fitzgerald's "Kings and Queens of an Hour," and Gilbert's "History of Dublin."

The illustrations are principally taken from portraits in the National Gallery of Dublin, permission having been obtained for the purpose.

One portrait, that of Miss Farren, has been copied from a coloured print of Bartolozzi, now in my possession.

Photograph by] [*T. F. Geoghegan.*

ELIZABETH GUNNING,

DUCHESS OF HAMILTON, AFTERWARDS DUCHESS OF ARGYLL.

NOTABLE IRISHWOMEN

The Beautiful Gunnings.

I.

Maria Gunning (Countess of Coventry), 1733-1760.
Elizabeth Gunning (Duchess of Hamilton and afterwards Duchess of Argyll), 1734-1790.

At the Bal Poudré, given at Dublin Castle in the spring of 1903, two figures were prominent, the Countess of Chesterfield and her sister, Miss Gladys Wilson, who represented the beautiful Gunning sisters—the two Irish beauties who set the fashionable world of London in a blaze, and ended by being, to use Horace Walpole's words, "Countessed and double Duchessed." The luck of the Gunnings has passed into a proverb. Their story is, indeed, far stranger than fiction. The fairy tale of Cinderella and the glass slipper is the only thing that can be compared to it. Their father, John Gunning, of Castle Coote, Co. Roscommon,

belonged to a good old Irish family, and through his mother, Catherine Geraghty, he inherited a strain of purely Celtic blood. This good lady brought her husband no less than sixteen children, of whom the father of the beauties was the second son. He was a handsome man, with an aquiline nose, as may be seen from his portrait, which is in the National Portrait Gallery of Dublin. Some lines of his which are appended to his portrait, show the benevolence and kindness of his disposition. He was urged by his friends to go and hear a celebrated singer who was attracting admiring crowds, and his answer was that he could not bring himself to go to any place of amusement while there was so much poverty and distress around him. He concludes his verses, which are rather lengthy, as follows :

"The poor to pity still my heart incline,
For all the good I do, O Lord, is thine!"

He succeeded in winning the heart of Bridget, daughter of the sixth Viscount Mayo. Though the Honourable Bridget had rank, she had little or no fortune. This drawback did not, however, stand in the way of the marriage, and in October, 1731, she became Mrs. Gunning. Her husband was a barrister of the Middle Temple, and was certainly not overburthened with briefs. He probably succeeded in getting some small appointment in the country, for

he settled down at Hemingford Grey, in Huntingdonshire, and here his eldest daughter, Maria, afterwards Countess of Coventry, was born in 1733. Elizabeth, afterwards Duchess of Hamilton, followed the year afterwards, and there were three more daughters, two of whom died young, and then came a son, who subsequently entered the army, fought at Bunker's Hill, and attained the rank of General.

In 1740, by the death of his elder brother, Mr. Gunning succeeded to the property of Castle Coote. The little family now migrated from Hemingford Grey to Roscommon, a formidable journey in those days of stage coaches and sailing boats. Money was not plentiful at Castle Coote, and no wonder, with such numerous charges as there must have been on it. Mrs. Gunning was a clever, ambitious woman, and as she looked at the wonderful beauty of her daughters, fast growing to maturity, she thought that the girls must be taken out into the world to make their mark there. It would never do for them to be thrown away on country squires or struggling attorneys. So she brought them to Dublin, and took a house in Great Britain Street, at that time quite a fashionable locality, within easy reach of Dominick Street, then the head-quarters of high life. But debts soon accumulated. We hear of the woful plight into which the Gunnings fell in these early

Dublin days, from the Memoirs of George Anne Bellamy, the popular actress, who was then on a professional visit to Ireland. She says in the stilted, artificial style prevalent in those days :—

"As I was returning one day from rehearsal at the bottom of Britain Street I heard the voice of distress. Yielding to an impulse of humanity I overleaped the bounds of good breeding, and entered the house from whence it proceeded. When I had done this, led by irresistible attraction, I entered without ceremony the parlour, the door of which was guarded by persons not at all suited to those that were within. I here found a woman of most elegant figure, surrounded by four most beautiful girls, and a sweet boy of about three years of age. After making the necessary apologies for my abrupt intrusion, I informed the lady that as the lamentations of her little family had reached my ears as I passed by, I had taken the liberty to inquire if I could render her any assistance.

"Mrs. Gunning, for that was the lady's name, rose immediately from her seat, and calling me by my name, thanked me for my offer of assistance, complimenting me at the same time for possessing such humane sensations. She then informed me that, having lived beyond her income, her husband had been obliged to retire into the country to avoid the disagreeable consequences that must ensue; that she had been in hopes that her

brother, Lord Mayo, listening to the dictates of fraternal affection, would not suffer a sister and her family to be reduced to distress, but his lordship remained inflexible to her repeated solicitations. The ill-looking men I now found had entered the house by virtue of execution, and were preparing to throw her and her children out-of-doors."

Good-natured Miss,—or as she is sometimes designated, Mrs.—Bellamy came to the rescue. She lent the Gunnings money, and, according to some accounts, she brought them to her own house and sheltered them there. An intimacy soon sprung up, and a story is told of the two beauties going with Mrs. Bellamy to have their fortunes told by a famous fortune-teller in Capel Street. The scene would make a fine subject for a painter. The prophetess foretold a splendid future for the two girls. Maria was to marry an earl, and to be loved exceedingly; as for Elizabeth, no less than two coronets were promised to her, both of the strawberry leaves of a duchess. To poor George Anne Bellamy, who had slipped a wedding ring on her finger with the object of deceiving the soothsayer, the angry woman cried, "Take off that wedding ring—you never were, you never will be, married!" A few words whispered into the terrified actress's ear completed her dismay. Then the fortune-teller vanished, leaving

the two Gunnings in a pleasurable flutter of excitement.

"Sure, I don't care if I am only to be a countess," said silly, artless Maria, "as long as my lord loves me." But prudent Elizabeth said nothing, she always knew when to be silent and when to speak.

A letter from Maria Gunning to Mrs. Bellamy is given in Frances Gerard's interesting book—*Some Celebrated Irish Beauties of the Last Century.* The spelling and grammar are both atrocious, but it shows that there was friendship between the actress and the future Countess of Coventry.

Here are a few sentences from it:—

"I received my dearest Mrs. Bellamy's letter after her long silence. Indeed, I was very Jealous with you, but you make me amens by Letting me hear from you now. . . . Dublin is the stupites [stupidest] place. . . . . .

"I beleive Sheridan can get no one to play with him, he is doing all he can to get funds for himsef to be sure, you have heard he is married for sertain to Miss Chamberlain, a sweet pare.

"I must bid adue, and shall only say I am, my Dr. yours ever affectly

"M. GUNNING."

The Sheridan mentioned in this letter was the father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was organising a theatrical company. At one time

there was some talk of the two beauties going on the stage; they were introduced by Mrs. Bellamy to Peg Woffington and to Garrick. But Peg Woffington, as she looked at the bright fresh faces of the Gunnings, advised them to leave the theatre alone, she well knew the pit-falls that would await them there. It was said that Peg Woffington lent the Gunnings dresses from her theatrical wardrobe, in which they appeared at Dublin Castle. Whether this be true or not, it is certain that they were presented to the Lord Lieutenant at a birthnight ball, and they made such a sensation there that Lord Harrington, then Viceroy, advised their mother to take them to London. This she was only too eager to do. By hook or by crook she got the money together. Through Lord Harrington's influence £150 was obtained from the Irish Establishment, loans were given by friends, and a rich young lady, Miss Plaistow, was put under Mrs. Gunning's chaperonage to be introduced into London society. The year they went to London, the two girls had their portraits painted by Francis Cotes, R.A. They are represented in low-cut, long-waisted, grey satin gowns, with rows of pink rosettes down each side of the bodice, black hair curled at the back and fastened with a string of pearls. A small black patch, is, according to the fashion of the day, on one cheek. We can see from these striking likenesses something of that wonderful beauty

which enchanted the world. Both sisters were tall—their enemies said much too tall—with supple slight figures, a peculiarly graceful turn of shoulders and neck, dark liquid hazel eyes, with delicately arched eyebrows, and, above all, a frank triumphant expression of face, which seems to say that they enjoyed life, and found it a pleasure to live. They resembled each other to an extraordinary degree, though Maria was always considered the prettier of the two,while Elizabeth was the cleverer, and had more dignity and discretion. One was 18 and the other 17 when, in April, 1751, they dawned on the London horizon, conquering, and to conquer, in all the dazzling bloom of youth. Horace Walpole says: —"There are two Irish girls, of no fortune, who make more noise than any of their predecessors since the days of Helen, and are declared the two handsomest women alive. I think there being two so handsome, and such perfect figures, is their chief excellence, for singly I have seen much handsomer women than either. However, they can't walk in the park, or go to Vauxhall, but such mobs follow them that they themselves are driven away."

They were presented to the King (George II.) one Sunday afternoon, and another Sunday in the Park, such crowds assembled to gaze on them that Lord Clermont with some other gentlemen, had to draw their swords to protect them from the mob.

They were more talked about than the change in the Ministry.

In George Selwyn's Memoirs, he says—"Someone proposes a stroll to Betty's fruit shop (in St. James's Street). Suddenly the cry is raised 'The Gunnings are coming!' and we all tumble out to gaze and criticise."

They were quite aware of their own charms. Horace Walpole tells a story that one day when they were going over Hampton Court Palace, the housekeeper, wishing to show the room containing Kneller's pictures of the Hampton Court beauties, cried, "This way for the Beauties!" On this, the sisters flew into a passion, and said they were come to see the palace, and not to be shown off as a sight. Malicious tricks were often played off on them, with a view of injuring them in fashionable society. The Duchess of Bedford was about to give a masquerade, to which the Gunnings were pining to be invited. A sham card of invitation arrived, but their mother soon detected the hoax, for by using a strong chemical to the writing, another name was found underneath. Mrs. Gunning was equal to the occasion. Accompanied by one of her lovely daughters, and with the sham card of invitation in her hand, she called on the Duchess, and to her great joy, she received a genuine invitation to the masquerade. Many admirers had buzzed round

the beauties during their first London season. Scotch and English peers had sighed around them, but no eligible offers had come. Mrs. Gunning took her daughters to Bath, and in a few months they were back again in London in renewed beauty. Mrs. Montagu speaks of seeing these "goddesses of Gunnings wrapped in quilted satin pelisses, their lovely throats hid by rich furs, which set off the brilliancy of their complexions. In this garb the beauties took their noble admirers by storm, and fairly beat down every remnant of prudence."

The Duke of Hamilton was a well-known man about town, of no enviable reputation, fond of gambling and late hours. Horace Walpole says: "that the Duke having fallen in love with Elizabeth Gunning at a masquerade six weeks ago, made such violent love to her to-night, at Lord Chesterfield's, that he saw neither the bank nor his own cards, which were three hundred each, and soon lost a thousand."

Elizabeth Gunning kept cool; she drew the Duke on, bets were freely exchanged on the issue, but finally, one evening, when he found himself alone with her, his ardour grew so great that he insisted that the marriage should take place at once. So it did at half-past twelve, at midnight, on the 14th February, 1752, at Mayfair Chapel. No wedding ring was procurable at that hour, and,

Painted by F. Cotes, R.A.] [*Photograph by T. F. Geoghegan.*

ELIZABETH GUNNING,

DUCHESS OF HAMILTON, AFTERWARDS DUCHESS OF ARGYLL.

according to Horace Walpole, they were married with the ring of a bed-curtain.

Just a fortnight afterwards, Maria Gunning became a Countess by her marriage with the Earl of Coventry, who had been dangling about her for many months. Her sister's marriage, no doubt, had precipitated events. These "amazing marriages" were the talk of the town. In the same year, 1752, two murderesses, Mrs. Jefferies and Mrs. Blandy, were hanged at Newgate, and Sir Joshua Reynolds caustically remarked, "The general attention is divided between the two young ladies who were married, and the two young ladies who were hanged."

When the Duchess of Hamilton was presented at court after her marriage, "the noble mob at the Drawing-room clambered upon tables and chairs to look at her." A more beautiful or dignified duchess could not be found. She had two sons and a daughter (afterwards Countess of Derby), and was left a widow in 1759, but her widowhood was of short duration. She was soon engaged to the Duke of Bridgewater, an engagement which was broken off because she would not give up her sister, whose conduct was rather reprehensible. Finally she married Colonel John Campbell, heir to the Duke of Argyll. She still kept her first title, till her husband succeeded to the Dukedom. Horace Walpole says "it was a marriage worthy of

Arcadia." The enthusiasm about her beauty still continued. When she visited York, seven hundred people sat up all night to see her get into her post-chaise next morning, and a shoe-maker at Worcester made two guineas and a half in pennies by exhibiting her Grace's shoe to an admiring public.

Lady Coventry, meanwhile, distinguished herself by her silliness as well as by her beauty. She had a perfect genius for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. When the King (George II.) asked her if she were not sorry that there were no more masquerades, she answered, "No, she was tired of them, but there was one thing she did want to see—*a coronation!*" The King used to tell this story himself with much amusement.

Mrs. Delany, writing in 1754, gives a vivid pen and ink sketch of Lady Coventry's appearance. "Yesterday, after chapel, the Duchess of Portland brought Lady Coventry to feast me, and a feast she was! She is a fine figure, and vastly handsome, notwithstanding a silly look sometimes about her mouth. She has a thousand airs, but with a sort of innocence that diverts one. Her dress was a black silk sack, made for a large hoop, which she wore without any, and it trailed a yard on the ground; she had on a cobweb laced handkerchief, a pink satin long cloak, lined with ermine, mixed with squirrel skins; on her head a French cap, that just covered the top of her head, of blonde,

which stood in the form of a butterfly, with its wings not quite extended; frilled sort of lappets were crossed under her chin and tied with pink and green ribbon, a head-dress that would have charmed a shepherd! She has a thousand dimples and prettinesses in her cheeks, her eyes a little drooping at the corners, but fine for all that."

Perhaps the most poetical tribute to Lady Coventry's charms was made by the Rev. Richard Mason, in the following lines :—

"Whene'er with soft serenity, she smiled,
Or caught the orient blush of quick surprise,
How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild,
The liquid lustre darted from her eyes!
Each look, each motion, waked a new-born grace
That o'er her form a transient glory cast;
Some lovelier wonder soon usurped the place,
Chased by a charm, still lovelier than the last!"

After a visit to Paris with her husband, Horace Walpole maliciously says, "Poor Lady Coventry was under disadvantages, for, besides being very silly, ignorant of the world, speaking no French and suffered to wear neither red nor powder, she had that perpetual disadvantage, her lord, who speaks French just enough to show how rude he is."

At a large dinner party in Paris, he chased his

wife round the table with a dinner napkin, to wipe off the rouge that she would persist in daubing on her face.

Lady Coventry, though lovable in herself, did not meet with much affection from her husband. He soon wearied of her, and she consoled herself with numerous flirtations, and by the amusements of the card table. Quadrille was her favourite game; she used to play it for four hours a day, and often lost from twenty to thirty pounds at a sitting.

In 1757 she complained to the King that she could not walk in the park, because of the mob that surrounded her, so he ordered a guard to attend her. When she pretended to be frightened, the officer on guard ordered twelve sergeants to march abreast before her, and the sergeant and twelve men behind, "and in this pomp," adds a contemporary writer, "did this idiot walk all the evening with more mob about her than ever, her sensible husband on one side, and Lord Pembroke on the other."

In March, 1859, she was looking in great beauty at her sister's wedding. She showed George Selwyn her new dress for the Drawing-room, blue, with spots of silver the size of a shilling. She asked Selwyn how he liked it, and his answer was "Oh, you will be change for a guinea."

But her days for frivolity and admiration were fast drawing to a close. In August, 1760,

she became seriously ill and lingered for some months at Croome Court. It has often been said that Lady Coventry died from the immoderate use of cosmetics in which there was a large quantity of white lead, but consumption was more probably the real cause of her death. Her youngest sister had died of it, and the Duchess of Hamilton's two sons were also victims to the scourge. When confined to bed, Lady Coventry kept a pocket glass under her pillow which she looked at from time to time, so as to note the ravages made by disease in her once lovely features. She died at the early age of 27, leaving a son and two daughters. The public interest in her continued even after her death, for 10,000 people went to see the outside of her coffin.

Her sister, the Duchess of Hamilton, was also threatened with consumption, but a visit to Italy restored her to health again. She was one of the two duchesses appointed to be the escort of the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the intended bride of George III. The first time the homely little Princess saw the two duchesses, she asked, "Are all Englishwomen as beautiful as you are?" Her entry into London was made by Mile End Road, and when the Princess heard that her wedding was to take place that evening, she grew so white that lavender water had to be thrown in her face to revive her. Seeing the Duchess of

Hamilton smile, the young Princess said, "My dear Duchess, you may laugh, *you* have been twice married, but it is no joke to me."

When her husband succeeded to the Dukedom of Argyll, Elizabeth Gunning remembered the prophecy of the fortune-teller in Capel Street, for she was doubly a duchess, an honour which only the present Duchess of Devonshire can claim. During the Wilkes riots in 1768 she behaved with great determination. Though her husband was absent and she was in delicate health, she stoutly refused to illuminate her house in Argyll Buildings at the bidding of the mob, who battered the doors and windows for three hours. She could always put down any impertinent people with true aristocratic hauteur. When her daughter, Lady Augusta Campbell, eloped with a Mr. Clavering, Lady Tweeddale saw fit to congratulate her on the event.

"No great joy, madam," she answered, "There was no occasion for Lady Augusta Campbell to marry."

She was the mother of no less than four dukes. Her two sons by her first marriage, James George and Douglas, both became Dukes of Hamilton, and her two sons by her second marriage, George William and John Douglas, both became Dukes of Argyll. The present Duke of Argyll is her direct descendant. What a destiny for a penniless Irish

girl! It seemed as though fortune was never tired of pouring gifts on her. The King created her a Peeress in her own right by the title of Baroness Hamilton of Hambledon, in Leicestershire, and she was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen. She died at the age of 56, having borne her honours with great dignity. When Dr. Johnson and Boswell paid their celebrated visit to the Hebrides, she received Boswell with great hauteur. He says, that when the duke announced his name to the duchess, who was sitting with her daughter, Lady Betty Hamilton, and some other ladies, she took not the slightest notice of him.

Boswell adds, "When I recollected that my punishment was inflicted by so dignified a beauty, I had that kind of consolation which a man would feel who is strangled by a silken cord." Dr. Johnson was very much pleased with his visit to Inverary Castle. The duchess may have found it necessary to assume this manner, for her own relations were still in a subordinate position. Her youngest sister Kitty generally known as the "youngest of the Graces" married plain Mr. Travis, and was appointed housekeeper at Somerset House, a very lucrative post, which her mother, Mrs. Gunning, held before her.

Never before, or since, has there been such a story as that of the Gunnings. It has tempted many novelists, amongst them Mr. F. Frankfort Moore,

who has founded his novel, *The Fatal Gift*, on some episodes in their romantic career, but to those who like studies from actual life, it is quite as interesting to follow the fortunes of the two sisters, as they are spread out before us in the pages of the history and biographies of that time.

And if we want a lesson, there is surely one to be found—that great beauty does not always bring happiness. Lady Coventry's dying hours are a sad proof of the vanity of human wishes. Even while she was breathing her last breath, her husband was courting her successor. She had not found what she most wished for—a heart that answered to her own.

Painted by] [*Sir Thos. Lawrence.*

MISS FARREN

AFTERWARDS COUNTESS OF DERBY.

II.

Elizabeth Farren

(Countess of Derby),

1759-1829.

ACCORDING to a theory of Charles Kingsley, the finest type of race is produced by the mixture of the Celt with the Saxon. Along with the brilliance, the dash, the living glow of the Celt, we have the steadiness, the perseverance, and the dogged determination of the Anglo-Saxon. However this may be, it is certain that some of the most remarkable women are the daughters of Irish fathers and English mothers, We have Maria Edgeworth, Felicia Hemans, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Lady Morgan, and, to this number, may be added the name of Elizabeth Farren, an actress of whom Ireland may well be proud. There is a good portrait of Miss Farren in the Dublin National Portrait Gallery, but the likeness by which she is best known is the famous full-length painting of her by Sir Thomas Lawrence. We see her tall, slight, willowy figure, gracefully draped in white, her large lustrous blue eyes, her fair curly hair, and the winning, appealing expres-

sion that seems to ask for sympathy and support. Essentially feminine as she was, Elizabeth Farren had strength of will and discretion, so that she kept her reputation untarnished, and in a most corrupt age, though she might be accused of meanness, ingratitude, and parsimony, scandal had nothing to say against her moral character. On her marriage with the twelfth Earl of Derby, she was received at Court by the virtuous Queen Charlotte, and was even allowed to join in the wedding procession of the Princess Royal with the Duke of Wurtemburg. What a transition from her early years, when it was said she used to beat the drum as the strolling company made their entrance into a provincial t: wn!

The father of Elizabeth—or as she is often called, Eliza Farren—was a surgeon-apothecary by profession, a native of Cork, who married the daughter of a Liverpool brewer, or, some say, publican, named Wright. It was at Cork that Eliza Farren was born in 1759. George Farren grew tired of medicine, and took to the stage, for which he had a marked ability. He joined a company of strolling players, and with his wife and family—a family that, by degrees, mounted up to the number of seven, he travelled about in England from town to town. The lot of strolling players in those days was certainly not a happy one, and unfortunately George Farren

was too fond of imbibing strong potations. It was said that once, while he was on the stage, he was so drunk that when he had to say the words, "Thus I tear this letter!" his hand was too unsteady to suit the action to the word; he could only throw the letter from him, and say, "Thus I throw this letter from me." He soon got tired of being ordered about, and took the management of a company into his own hands. A pretty story is told, that on Christmas Eve, 1769, the Farren Company made their entrance into Salisbury, with drums beating, and all the other accompaniments. The Mayor of the town, much annoyed at the obstruction that was created, summoned the manager to appear before him and to produce his licence. The licence not being forthcoming, Mr. Farren was promptly conveyed to Salisbury Jail. But now comes in the cream of the story. Little Lizzie, who was, no doubt, a pretty and interesting child, wanted to give her father a Christmas breakfast, and though the snow was thick on the ground, she carried a bowl of bread and milk to the prison. But here a new difficulty presented itself. She was not tall enough to reach the window and to pass in the bowl, but a boy, a few years older than herself, had seen her pass his father's shop, and had followed her to the prison. He came to the rescue, lifted her up to the window, and she fulfilled her kindly errand.

This boy afterwards became Chief Justice Burroughs, and years afterwards, when the poor, shabby little girl had blossomed into a Countess, they met again on the Windsor Road, and again help was given, and received, as we shall hear.

George Farren died, a comparatively young man, and his widow and children had to support themselves as best they could. Two of his daughters, Eliza and Peggy (afterwards Mrs. Knight), took small juvenile parts, Eliza having been a sort of infant phenomenon almost from her babyhood.

At the age of fourteen she was acting with her mother and sister at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, under T. W. Wilkinson, and when only fifteen she made her first appearance at Liverpool, as Rosetta in "Love in a Village." She was now under Mr. Younger, a kind, benevolent man, as well as an excellent manager. He took the greatest interest in the young actress, and treated her as his own child. He strongly advised her to go to London, and gave her an introduction to Colman, who at that time controlled the destinies of the Haymarket Theatre, and who was all powerful in the theatrical world, being a dramatic author as well as a capable and experienced manager.

On the 9th June, 1777, Eliza Farren appeared at the Haymarket in the character of Kate Hardcastle, in Goldsmith's comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." She was favourably but not enthusias-

tically received. Her progress in public favour did not come all in a bound, as it did with her countrywoman, Mrs. Jordan. On the contrary, years elapsed before the actress of eighteen, who had made her *début* at the Haymarket, was acknowledged to be a star.

Miss Farren and her mother lodged in Suffolk Street, near the Haymarket. We are told that when an acquaintance from Liverpool, who belonged to a theatrical company there, called upon them, he was invited to take share of the family dinner, which consisted of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, served in the brown dish in which they were baked and a plain pot of porter.

The elder Colman gave Mrs. Farren the nickname of "Tin Pocket." One morning, after rehearsal, this notable dame was observed hastening after her daughter as she came out of the theatre and exclaiming repeatedly, "It will be cold; it will be cold!" Colman fancied that he smelt something eatable, and that this something came from Mrs. Farren's pocket. Becoming curious, he insisted on examining it, when he found that she had a pocket lined with tin, which contained some hot boiled beef that she had just bought at a provision shop. This was intended for the dinner of herself and her daughter. She told Colman that she got the pocket made on purpose so as not to waste the gravy which was given with the meat. There was

surely nothing disgraceful in this ; but after Miss Farren's elevation to the peerage all those little incidents of her early struggles, were dragged to light in order to put her to the blush. But economy in everything, even in a spoonful of gravy, is rather creditable than otherwise ; and the Farrens were bound to be careful, for they were in low water, and had nothing to depend upon but their own wits.

A turning point in Miss Farren's career came when she was invited to superintend some private theatricals which were given by the Duke of Richmond at Whitehall. The play represented was "The Heiress," written by General John Burgoyne, brother-in-law to the Earl of Derby. Miss Farren made a great success in the part of the heroine, and was subsequently known as "Miminy Piminy," a name she was called in the play. Prominent among the amateur actors, was the Earl of Derby who took one of the comic parts. He was married to Lady Betty Hamilton, only daughter of Elizabeth Gunning, the famous Irish beauty, by her first marriage with the Duke of Hamilton. The Countess of Derby was very pretty, but very wild and indiscreet in her conduct, and the marriage turned out most unhappily. From the time that Miss Farren appeared on the scene, Lord Derby had eyes and ears for no one else, and spent his time running after the beautiful actress, who on her part treated him with great hauteur.

She made a point of never seeing him except in the presence of a third person, generally her mother, who lived with her. Lady Derby was soon engrossed in a violent flirtation with the Duke of Dorset. Even the good-natured earl got out of patience with her, and divorce proceedings were threatened. They fell through from want of evidence, but a separation, by mutual consent, was arranged. No blame could be attached to Miss Farren who went on zealously with her profession. She had the support and friendship of many aristocratic leaders of society—the Duchess of Leinster, Lady Cecilia Johnson and Lady Dorothea Thomson, all introduced to her by Lord Derby. She was now at the full tide of success and her appearance is thus described :—" Her figure is considerably above the middle height and is of that slight texture which requires the use of full and flowing drapery. Her face, though not strictly beautiful, is animated and prepossessing ; her eye, blue and penetrating, is a powerful feature when she chooses to employ it on the public, and either flashes with spirit or melts with softness ; her voice is refined and feminine and her smile fascinates the heart, as her form delights the eye." Colman trusted her with the part of Rosina in " The Spanish Barber," and admirers flocked round her in crowds. Among them was Charles James Fox, then the hope of the Whig party and a prominent figure in society. His

attentions might have developed into something serious if Miss Farren had not appeared in the part of Nancy Love in Colman's play of "The Suicide." Disguised as Dick Rattler, in what was then called a "breeches part," her grace and symmetry vanished. She was declared to be "all in one straight line from head to foot," and Fox ceased his attentions.

As Lady Townley in "The Provoked Husband," and Lady Fanciful in "A Provoked Wife," she was restored to public favour again and never repeated this unfortunate experiment. She was called "the lovely and accomplished Miss Farren" by George Colman, the younger, who adds that "no person more successfully performed the elegant levities of Lady Townley." Hazlitt speaks enthusiastically of "her fine lady airs and graces, with that elegant turn of the head and motion of her fan and tripping of her tongue." Horace Walpole goes so far as to say "she was the most perfect actress he had ever seen," and Richard Cumberland calls her style exquisite. When Mrs. Abington retired from the stage in 1782, Miss Farren reigned without a rival in depicting fine ladies of fashion. She sometimes took Shakespearean parts—Maria in "Twelfth Night," Portia, Hermione and Juliet—but she was always at her best as the fashionable lady of the period, wielding her fan with dexterity and grace. In August, 1785,

she appeared as Mrs. Euston in Mrs. Inchbald's comedy, "I'll tell you what." Mrs. Inchbald is now chiefly known as the author of the novel, "A Simple Story"; but her plays were tolerably successful at a time when a women dramatist was as rare as a white blackbird. We are told that the house was convulsed with bursts of laughter, and at other times dissolved in tears. There were some points of resemblance between Mrs. Euston of the play and Miss Farren in real life. They both had an aristocratic admirer. As time went on, Lord Derby's attentions were redoubled, eighteen long years had no power to change his constancy. He was often seen following Miss Farren from Drury Lane to her house in Green Street, Grosvenor Square, "puffing as he went for want of breath," while she hardly deigned to give him a smile. Her coldness and indifference only increased his warmth. Though past the age of romance he frequently burst into poetry, and some of his tributes to his fair enchantress have been preserved. We have "Lines by Lord Derby to Mr. Humphry on his portrait of Miss Farren," in which he says:—

"Pleas'd I behold the Fair, whose comic art,
Th' unwearied eye of taste and judgment draws,
Who charms with native elegance the heart
And claims the loudest thunder of applause."

Still more interesting are the lines addressed by

Lord Derby to Miss Farren on her absence from church :—

"While wand'ring angels, as they look'd from high
Observed thine absence with a holy sigh
To them a bright exalted seraph said,
'Blame not the conduct of the absent maid,
Where'er she goes, her steps can never stray,
Religion walks companion of her way ;
She goes, with ev'ry virtuous thought imprest,
Heav'n in her face, and heav'n within her breast !' "

In March, 1797, when Miss Farren was approaching her thirty-seventh year, the news came of the death of the Countess of Derby, whose health had been failing for some time. Her end was a sad one. With beauty and charm she died, neglected and forsaken by all her admirers, even her debts, amounting to £5,000, were paid by her own family. There was no doubt about her successor ; the coveted position was at once laid at the feet of Miss Farren. In the following month, April 8th, 1797, she made her farewell appearance as Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal." The theatre was packed to the doors, and Lady Teazle's closing words had a special significance on this occasion :—

"Let me also request, Lady Sneerwell, that you will make my respects to the scandalous college of which you are a member, and inform them that

Lady Teazle begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer ! "

Moved even to tears, Miss Farren was then led off the stage for the last time. Her marriage with the Earl of Derby took place on the 8th May (just a month after her farewell appearance on the stage), by special licence, at his house in Grosvenor Square, and the happy pair set off for The Oaks. Many were the jokes made by the wits about Darby and Joan, but there is no doubt that in the case of Elizabeth Farren, virtue did meet its due reward, and she and her earl lived happily together. A son and two daughters were born of the marriage, so there was nothing to mar their bliss. Only one daughter, however, lived to grow up.

It says much for Miss Farren that during the two months of Lord Derby's widowhood, his eldest son, Lord Stanley, regularly escorted her to and from the theatre, to show that his feelings towards his future step-mother were of the friendliest kind. On the evening of the wedding, Mrs. Siddons came forward at Drury Lane to deliver some complimentary lines alluding to the loss sustained by the stage from the retirement of " Our Comic Muse." A curious caricature was made of the happy pair as Cupid and Psyche, she, tall and slim, head and shoulders over the earl, who was short, stout, and gouty.

It was said that when the newly-made Countess was presented to Queen Charlotte, she could not altogether forget her theatrical phraseology and remarked " that the most blissful moment of her life was that in which she had the honour of appearing before Her Majesty in a new character." Whether she ever actually used these words, it is impossible to say, for envy, malice, and all uncharitableness were unusually busy at the time of her elevation to the peerage.

It was on her way to Windsor, one winter's night, that her coach broke down, and she had to get out and sit by the roadside. Another coach was following behind, and an elderly gentleman, who was inside, put out his head to see what was the matter. He offered to give the lady a seat until her servants had repaired the damage. She accepted, and, to her amazement, she found out that the stranger, was no other than Chief Justice Burroughs, who, as a boy, had befriended her in the predicament of her childhood, outside Salisbury Jail.

Such a coincidence seems almost too good to be true. But anyway, the story is told, and strange things do happen, as we all know, in everyday life. Lady Derby died at Knowsley Park, on the 28th April, 1829. In her latter years she lost her good looks, and became very fond of snuff taking. Her husband only survived her five years.

As an actress, she was considered too cold. There was a strong strain of practical common-sense about her. She was never carried away by passion or impulse, she never lost her moral equilibrium, though often sorely tempted, as well as cruelly ridiculed by those whom it was her interest to please. She sustained her honours with dignity, and reflected credit on the historic house of Stanley.

III.

The Countess of Cork and Orrery,

1747-1840.

IT is a recognised fact that women of Irish or French nationality are better suited to be leaders of society than their more sedate Anglo-Saxon sisters. The Celtic temperament is eminently social; the variety, the movement, the excitement of society are congenial to it.

Next to Frenchwomen, the Irish are the best hostesses. Who that has ever been at one of Lady Wilde's receptions in that well-known house at Oakley Street, can forget how admirably she received her guests, saying the right thing to each, and making even the most obscure guest feel at home.

A born leader of society was the woman whose name stands at the head of this article. For sixty years she kept a mimic court at which every celebrity of any kind was welcome. Beginning with Dr. Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, Boswell, and Reynolds, she went on to Sheridan, Moore, Byron, Kemble, and other lesser notabilities. She either had a dinner party, a reception, or else

she went out every night of her life. Society was as the breath of her nostrils, she was never so much at her ease as when she was receiving guests, or exhibiting lions, literary or otherwise. Though she rarely seems to have visited Ireland, on her mother's side, at any rate, she came of a thoroughly Irish stock—the family of Westenra. Her Irish blood came out in her temperament; she was warm-hearted, hospitable, generous, desirous of making an impression either by exhibiting herself, or being an exhibitor of other people. Vain she certainly was, but never ill-natured or churlish. She never sought out people merely for their rank or riches, but because she enjoyed their society. Her parties were the pleasantest in London, because they were exempt from the monotony that then brooded over the leaders of English fashion. Connected by birth and by marriage with two families of high rank, she was perfectly free from pride and ostentation.

She was the youngest child and only surviving daughter of John Monckton, first Viscount Galway by his second wife, Jane, fourth daughter of Henry Warner Westenra, of Rathleagh, Queen's County.

Maria Monckton was born in 1747, and lived to the patriarchal age of 93, being generally known in her later years as "Old Lady Cork." She was compared by Luttrell, the famous wit, to a shuttle-cock, "All Cork and feathers."

As the Hon. Miss Monckton, she was a prime favourite with Dr. Johnson, who delighted in her liveliness and intelligence.

Boswell says that Johnson "did not think himself too grave even for the lively Miss Monckton, who used to have the finest bit of blue at the house of her mother, Lady Galway. Her vivacity enchanted the sage, and they used to talk together with all imaginable ease. One evening she insisted that some of Sterne's writings were very pathetic. Johnson bluntly denied it.

"I am sure," she said, "they have affected me.

"Why," said Johnson, smiling, and rolling himself about, "that is because, dearest, you are a dunce."

When she repeated this speech to him afterwards, he said, "Madam, if I had thought it, I should not have said it."

Ever afterwards Miss Monckton became known as "Johnson's little dunce."

She did not at all object to the name, though she belonged to Mrs. Montagu's Blue Stocking Club, and frequented every literary re-union of the day. She once appeared at a masquerade at Mrs. Cornely's, at Soho, as an Indian Sultana, in a robe of cloth of gold, and a rich veil. The seams of her gown were embroidered with precious stones, and she had a magnificent cluster of diamonds on her head. Her jewels on this occasion were valued

at £30,000, and she was attended by four black female slaves.

Though the "noble house" in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, belonged to her mother, the Dowager Lady Galway, it was to all intents and purposes, Miss Monckton's. It was she who received the guests and did the honours, while Lady Galway sat by the fire in a little round white cap, flat to her head, and only spoke to those who were brought up to her.

Fanny Burney, the authoress of "Evelina," relates how Miss Monckton come to see her at Brighthelmstone, as Brighton was spelt in those days. She describes her as being between 30 and 40, very short, very fat, but handsome, with very bright eyes; she was splendidly and fantastically dressed, and "evidently and palpably desirous of gaining notice and admiration." Miss Burney adds, "She has an easy levity in her air and manner, that speaks all to be comfortable within, and her rage of seeing anything curious may be satisfied, if she pleases, by looking into a mirror." Miss Monckton told one story which Fanny Burney pronounced to be extremely worth relating. It was about the Duke of Devonshire, who happened to be at an assembly, and was standing close to a very fine glass lustre. By carelessly lolling back, he knocked the lustre down and it was broken to atoms. The people of the house, be it said, were

not rich enough to bear the loss with unconcern. The Duke, however, merely observed, "I wonder how I did that?" He then went to the opposite side of the room, and apparently forgetting what he had just done, leaned his head back and down came the other lustre. He looked at it very calmly and said philosophically and with perfect coolness, "This is singular enough," and walked away without distress or apology.

Fanny Burney next describes a reception she and her friends, the Thrales, went to at Miss Monckton's house in Charles Street. It is too long to give here, but it relates in a very amusing way how Miss Monckton never stood up to receive her guests, she only turned round her head to nod it, and say "How do you do?" Dr. Johnson was standing near the fire surrounded by listeners. Some new people coming in, Miss Monckton started up exclaiming, "My whole care is to prevent a circle."

Fanny Burney remarks that "the company were dressed with more brilliancy than at any rout I was ever at, as most of them were going on to the Duchess of Cumberland's. . . . At the sound of Burke's voice, Miss Monckton darted forward, crying out, 'Oh, that's Mr. Burke.'"

Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the party on this occasion. He had painted Miss Monckton in a pastoral attitude, sitting in a garden, with a dog at her feet. When Fanny Burney took her leave,

Miss Monckton pressed her to come another evening, when she would have Mrs. Siddons to meet her. This invitation was duly accepted. Two years afterwards—in May 1786—Miss Monckton married, at the mature age of 39, Edmund, seventh Earl of Cork and Orrery. His first marriage had been dissolved four years before. The second Lady Cork proved a much greater success than the first had done, and certainly no one could be dull with her. Her married life, however, was not a long one, for she was left a widow in 1798. Her *salons* were now held in a house in New Burlington Street, that she had decorated according to her own taste, which was rather in advance of the day she lived in. Her boudoir was literally filled with flowers and large looking-glasses, which reached from the top to the bottom. At the base was a brass railing, which, reflected in the glasses, had a very pretty effect. The boudoir was terminated by a sombre conservatory, where eternal twilight fell on fountains of rose-water "that never dry, and on beds of flowers that never fade."

Her receptions had now become noted features in London Society, and she would go to infinite trouble to secure a new attraction. Hearing that the celebrated surgeon, Sir Andrew Carlisle, had dissected and preserved a female dwarf, named Cochinie, Lady Cork became seized with the desire

to exhibit this curiosity at one of her assemblies. She asked eagerly :

"Would it do for a lion for to-night ?"

"Well, I think, hardly."

"But surely it would, if it is in spirits."

Off drove the indefatigable Lady Cork to Sir A. Carlisle's ; he was not at home, and the following conversation took place between her and the servant—

"There's no child here, madam."

"But," cried Lady Cork, "I mean the child in the bottle."

"Oh, this isn't the place where we bottle the children, madam, that is in the master's workshop."

She always signed herself "M. Cork and Orrery," which once caused an amusing mistake on the part of a furniture dealer. Lady Cork, having seen something in his window which took her fancy, wrote to him to send her what she wanted. His answer was as follows—"D.B. not having any dealings with 'M. Cork and Orrery,' begs to have a more explicit order, finding that the house is not known in the trade."

Talking of her conversaziones, she said, "My dear, I have pink evenings for the exclusives, blue for the literary, and grey for the religious ; I have them all in their turns ; then I have one party of all sorts, but I have no name for that."

Quite the best description of one of Lady Cork's

receptions is that given by Lady Morgan in her now forgotten "Book of the Boudoir." It was during her early fame as an authoress, she had only recently arrived from Ireland, and she says that her sensations at approaching the noted *salons* were those of her countryman, Maurice Quill, who, in the heat of the battle of Vittoria, exclaimed,

"By ——— ! I wish some of my greatest enemies were kicking me down Dame Street."

The account goes on to say—

"Lady Cork met me at the door of the suite of apartments, which opens with a brilliant boudoir.

"'What, no harp, Glorvina?' said her ladyship.

"'Oh, Lady Cork!'

"'Oh, Lady Fiddlestick! You are a fool, child; you don't know your own interests. Here James, William, Thomas, send one of the chairmen to Stanhope Street, for Miss Owenson's harp.'

"Led on by Dr. Johnson's celebrated 'little dunce,' I was at once merged in that crowd of *elegants* and *elegantes*, amongst which was a strikingly sullen-looking, handsome creature, the soon-to-be-celebrated Lord Byron. I found myself pounced down upon a sort of rustic seat by Lady Cork. . . So there I sat, the lioness of the evening, exhibited and shown like the hyena that never was tamed, looking about as wild, and feeling quite as savage. . . . Lady Cork

prefaced every introduction with a little exordium —'Lord Erskine, this is the Wild Irish Girl whom you were so anxious to know. I assure you she talks quite as well as she writes. Now, my dear, do tell Lord Erskine some of those Irish stories that you told the other evening at Lady Charleville's. Fancy yourself *en petit comité*, and take off the Irish brogue. Mrs. Abington says you would make a famous actress; she does indeed! This is the Duchess of St. Albans—she has your Wild Irish Girl by heart. Where is Sheridan? Do, my dear Mr. T.—(This is Mr. T., my dear, geniuses should know one another)—find me Mr. Sheridan. Oh, here he is! What! you know each other already? *Tant mieux*! This is Lord Carysfort. Mr. Lewis, do come forward! That is Monk Lewis, my dear, but you must not read his works, they are very naughty. . . . . Do see, somebody, if Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons have come yet, and pray tell us that scene at the Irish baronet's in the rebellion, that you told the ladies of Llangollen, and then give us your blue-stocking dinner at Sir R. Phillips's, and describe the Irish priests.' . ."

This graphic snap-shot of Lady Cork's conversation illustrates better than any long descriptions how she talked, and how she showed off her lions and lionesses. At one time, she had the Prince Regent on view; at another, the Countess Guiccioli (famous from her connection with Lord

Byron), while Moore and his singing were well known at her little dinners. He tells that one morning, at a rehearsal of a reading of Comus, when he had given a bad cold as an excuse for not taking part in it, she assailed him with a pitch-plaster, and proceeded to unbutton his waistcoat, with the intention of putting it on. He took flight, and she pursued him, with the plaster in her hand.

He notes in his journal that he called one morning on Lady Cork, who snubbed him for using the word "nice," and said that Dr. Johnson would never let her use it.

Mrs. Opie relates going to an assembly at Lady Cork's in 1814, at which Blucher, the Prussian General, was expected. The company, which included Lord Limerick, Lord and Lady Carysfort, James Smith of the "Rejected Addresses," Monk Lewis, &c., waited and waited, but no Blucher appeared. To keep up Lady Cork's spirits, Lady Caroline Lamb proposed acting a proverb, but it ended by acting the French word *orage* (a storm). She, Lady Cork, and Miss White went out of the room, and came back digging with the poker and tongs. They dug for gold (*or*) and they acted a passion for *rage,* and then acted a storm for the whole word *orage.* Still the old General did not come, and Lady Caroline disappeared; but previously Mrs. Wellesley Pole and her daughter arrived, bringing a beautiful Prince with them,

Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, (afterwards married to the Princess Charlotte). She feared Blucher would not come.

"However," continues Mrs. Opie, "we now heard a distant, then a near hurrah. . . . the hurrahs increased, and we all jumped up saying, 'there's Blucher at last!' The door opened, the servant calling out 'General Blucher!' on which in strutted Lady Caroline Lamb in a cocked hat and great coat!"

When Mrs. Opie joined the Quakers, Lady Cork wrote her a charming and most characteristic letter. She says in it.

"I must be glad that you are happy, but I must confess that I have too much self not to feel it a tug at my heart the no-chance I have of enjoying your society. Will your primitive cap never dine with me? Am I never to see you again? Pray, pray, do not put on the bonnet! So come to me and be my love in a dove-coloured garb, and a simple head-dress. Your friend of the lower House [Wilberforce in all probability], will agree with me that good people mixing with the world are of infinitely more use than when they confine themselves to one set. I could fill a paper with fun, but the cold water of your last makes me end my letter. God bless you, adieu. Yours ever, saint or sinner,

"M. Cork and Orrery."

One of the literary people befriended by Lady Cork was Thomas Hogg, a poet that she picked up in a ditch (he was a hedger and ditcher). She clothed and fed him, and had a bed made up for him in her stables. Great was the astonishment of Mrs. Opie and her friends when this "man in a slop" (an unbleached linen garment, worn by labourers) arrived, escorted by Lady Cork's footman, to read out his poem on Hope.

Though Lady Cork was famed for the excellence of her dinners, she was very temperate both in eating and drinking. Her usual drink was barley water. She chose to dress in pure white, and always wore a white crepe cottage bonnet, and a white satin shawl, trimmed with the finest point lace. She was never seen in a cap, and, although so old, her complexion, which was really pink and white, not put on, but her own natural colour, was beautiful. She had often been at the court of France during the reign of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, and never forgot what the Princess de Joinville once told her, that "neatness is the beauty of old age." She was very fond of birds, especially parrots and macaws, and once invited all the birds of her acquaintance to a party, in order that she might decide which was the cleverest. The winning bird was presented with a little gold collarette, from which a medal was suspended.

Lord Lansdowne said that he called on Lady

Cork one morning, and found her establishment in a state of bustle and excitement.

"Come in, Lord Lansdowne," cried Lady Cork "come in, I am so glad you came at this moment. Only think, the gray parrot has just laid an egg!"

During the latter years of her life, her eyesight became impaired, but she retained her gay spirits and her love for celebrities to the end. She was never really old, her interest in life was the same as ever. Under a sketch of her which was made by one of her grand nieces, she scrawled the words—

"Look at me,
I'm ninety-three,
And all my faculties I keep,
Eat, drink, and laugh, and soundly sleep!"

But even her vitality gave way at last, and she died in her ninety-fourth year, May 20th, 1840. She formed a link between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and filled a niche in society that no woman but herself could have occupied.

IV.

A Quaker Authoress.

MARY LEADBEATER,

Author of "Annals of Ballitore," "Cottage Dialogues," &c.

1758-1826.

THE village of Ballitore, through which the Gordon-Bennett motor race passed several times, was once noted as a Quaker settlement. Mary Leadbeater (formerly Shackleton), has written its chronicles, which are very delightful reading. She herself was an authoress of no little repute, her "Cottage Dialogues," published in 1810, being introduced to the public by a preface from Maria Edgeworth, who thought very highly of the book.

At the close of the eighteenth century the Society of Friends had become a power in Ireland, many of the richest merchants and traders—the Pims, the Bewleys, the Goodbodys, the Clibborns, and others—were Quakers. The village of Ballitore, in Kildare, was one of their strongholds, and was celebrated for a school of which Abraham

Shackleton was the founder. It was at this school that Edmund Burke, Napper Tandy, and many other men of mark, were educated.

Ballitore derives its name from its former marshy condition, Bally in Irish signifying a town, and togher, corrupted into tore—a bog. The first settlers were two Quakers, Abel Strettel and John Barcroft. They planted and builded until they made the valley into a garden of the Lord. In "A Tour through Ireland," published in 1792, it is thus described :—

"Within a mile of Timolin, on the right, our eyes were enraptured with the most delicious situation, where through the lofty trees we beheld a variety of neat dwellings. Through a road which looked like a fine terrace walk, we hastened to this lovely spot, where Nature, assisted by Art, gave us the most perfect gratification. It is a colony of Quakers, called by the name of Ballitore. The River Griese winds its stream very near the houses, and the buildings, orchards, and gardens show an elegant simplicity peculiar to this people. Their burying-ground, near the road, is surrounded with different trees, whose verdure made us imagine it a well-planted garden till we were informed otherwise. The hedges that enclose the meadows and fields are quick-set, kept of an equal height, and about every ten yards trees regularly pierce through them, forming

beautiful groves of a large extent. Industry reigns among this happy society, all their works are executed with taste, corrected by judgment, and seem to prosper as if Heaven smiled on their honest labours."

Prose seemed all too poor for Mary Leadbeater to describe her beloved Ballitore, so she celebrates it in a very long poem, of which one specimen may be given here :—

> "Then come, my friend, and taste once more,
> The beauties of sweet Ballitore ;
> This charming spot, where joys abound,
> By rising hills encompass'd round—
> Fair hills, which rear the golden brow,
> And smile upon the vale below."

The famous school, kept first by Abraham Shackleton, and then by Richard, his son (father of Mary Leadbeater), was principally intended for Quakers, though some of the pupils did not belong to the society.

The three young Burkes—Edmund and his two brothers—had such an aversion to a cross old woman who had been teaching them, before they went to Ballitore, that one evening they set out for her cabin with the intention of killing her. Fortunately she happened to be out. Very different were Edmund Burke's feelings towards

his schoolmaster, Abraham Shackleton, and as for his love for Dick Shackleton, his schoolmaster's son, it partook of the same nature as the love of David for Jonathan. After he entered Trinity College, Burke wrote to his "dear Dicky" continually, criticized his poetry, and fondly recalled incidents of his school-life at Ballitore.

Mary Shackleton was the daughter of Richard Shackleton, Burke's friend, and was born at Ballitore in 1758. Her daily life in this quiet community of Quakers has been admirably described by herself.

All were equal here, and the shady courts, the spotlessly clean kitchens, and the clipped yew trees, resembled a scene in Pennsylvania rather than in Kildare. Joseph Willis, in his gold-laced hat and waistcoat, used to go round pulling up the latches of his friends' doors, to inquire what they had for dinner, "even going so far as to poke his stick into the pot on the fire, for the inhabitants of Ballitore mostly sat in their kitchens in the forenoons." And then there was the excitement of the school continually going on, the busy hum of voices sounded in little Mary's ears, and she took in everything with her grave observant eyes.

"As I could read when four years old," says our little Quakeress, "I was able to peruse 'Stephen Crisp's Short History of a Long Travel

from Babylon to Bethel,' an allegory I by no means understood. Believing the whole to be literally true, I was wonderfully desirous to see that house which was to be the end and reward of so wearisome a journey. I frequently ascended a sloping flower bank in the garden, to gaze with awe and admiration at a house called Willowbank, which I thought was at such a distance that it must be the object of my ardent desires. How I was undeceived I know not, but undeceived I was, and on my grandfather's return from the London yearly meeting, thinking that Bethel was surely the object of such a long journey, I approached him with the inquiry if he had seen God's house."

First day, with its meetings and its long spells of silence, stood out prominently in the little Quaker girl's experiences. Sitting on her bench, she learned to love casement windows, for "one of these used to admit the light to each end of our meeting-house, and has often beguiled the lonesome hours by throwing the shadow of the trees in the grove in a fanciful manner to my view when seated in silence. Sometimes I thought these reflections of light and shade belonged to heaven and heavenly things, and I looked upon them with awe."

At that time, so our Quaker authoress informs us, a bright light-green silk apron was

worn by the strict Friends when going to meeting, also a black silk hood with long ends or lappets, and no bonnet.

The less strict Friends blossomed out into those pale fawns and drabs, and those pure white bonnet-strings which are such a refreshment to the eye.

Charles Lamb, in one of the "Essays by Elia," waxes enthusiastic about the Quakers and their spotless array. He exclaims:—

"Every Quakeress is a lily, and when they come up in bands to their Whitsuntide conferences whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, they show like troops of the Shining Ones."

The Ducketts were considered very genteel, at the yearly meetings in Dublin, all dressed in silk.

Molly Haughton, in her large black satin cloak, was something of a gossip.

"Well, what news?" she used to say. "Did thee hear so and so was married? And, by all I hear, it was a poor match enough. They tell me she had a fine fortune, but there's no believing the half one hears."

Our little Quakeress had her moments of naughtiness, which she takes pains to relate in full:—

"I was working a pair of pockets for myself in a shell pattern with green worsted. My

brothers called in, and, willing to show my dexterity, I began to work, when suddenly I recollected it was First day! Alarmed at what I had done, I laid down my work in dismay, and went to my favourite window in the garret, which commanded a pretty view. While I was thus solacing my eyes and comforting my heart, the window-sash fell on my neck and made me a prisoner. I roared with all my might. My aunt heard the cries, which, being outside the house, made her fear that one of us had fallen into the Sconce. She ran about, greatly terrified, to search for us while the continued wailings resounded in her ears. At length, finding that no one came to the rescue, I made a desperate effort and disengaged myself, having escaped with a bruised neck and a scratched face. I fully believed that this accident had befallen me because I had broken the Sabbath."

Mary and some of her father's pupils used to plant their teeth when they dropped out, in the fond hope that some marvellous growth, like that of the teeth of Cadmus, would be the result.

Behind the house and garden was a large yard, with two squares of grass for the boys to play on. A broad walk reached from the garden gate to the old border of yew at the upper end of the kitchen garden, in which were planted several apple trees. "So far as the walk continued

through the flower garden, it was gravelled, hence it became a grass walk, and had on each side thick yew hedges, on the ends of which, as they were intersected by cross walks, chairs were cut."

A great event in Mary Shackleton's quiet life was a visit to Edmund Burke at Beaconsfield, which she paid along with her father. Among the guests was the poet Crabbe, and years afterwards he wrote—"Mary Leadbeater! Yes, indeed, I do remember you; not Mary Leadbeater then, but a pretty, demure lass, standing a timid auditor while her own verses were read by a kind friend, but a keen judge—Edmund Burke."

This event was celebrated by the little Quaker maiden in some verses addressed to Burke. The verses are not remarkable, except for the occasion that called them forth.

"If I am vain, this letter read,
And let it for my pardon plead,
When he whom list'ning courts admire,
A senate's boast, a nation's pride,
When Burke commands my artless lyre,
I care not who commands beside;
And his reproof I value more
Than e'er I valued praise before."

After a visit to some cousins at Selby, in York-

shire, who introduced Mary to their friends as "our coosin frae Ireland, that makes the bonnie verses," the peaceful life at Ballitore began again.

In June, 1791, Mary Shackleton was married, at the age of 33, to William Leadbeater, a descendant of the French Huguenot families of Le Batre and Gilliard. Being an orphan, he was placed when very young at Ballitore school, and his attachment for Mary Shackleton began from that time. Their married life—singularly peaceful and happy—lasted for 35 years. After her death he was never seen to smile, and his hair, which had been black, became white as snow.

The rebellion of '98 caused great disturbance in the Quaker community. Mary Leadbeater says "Colonel Campbell was willing to grant protections to all peaceable people, but none of the Friends applied for them, some doubt being entertained of its being consistent with their principles to apply for armed protection. We were thus exposed to the imputation of being disaffected, and the provision we had for our families was rudely taken out of our houses for the yeomen. This was an unpleasant sight for the soldiers who were with us on free quarters, and they hid our bacon for us and for themselves. Great waste was committed and unchecked robbery. One hundred cars, loaded with hay, potatoes, oats, &c., led by their poor owners, and

guarded by soldiers, were in one day marched into Ballitore. Colonel Reamy urged his yeomen to take with a sparing hand, but he spoke to deaf ears. . . . One exception I must record. One of these men, quartered on us, refused to partake of the plunder on which so many of his comrades riotously feasted, yet he fell by the insurgents when the burst came.

"The village, once so peaceful, exhibited a scene of tumult and dismay, and the air rang with the shrieks of the sufferers and the lamentations of those who beheld them suffer. . . . I saw from an upper window a crowd coming towards our kitchen door, I went down and found many armed men, who desired to have refreshment, principally drink. I brought them milk and was cutting a loaf, when a little elderly man, called 'The Canny,' took it kindly out of my hand and divided it himself, saying 'Be dacent, boys; be dacent!' Encouraged by having found a friend, I ventured to tell them that so many armed men in the room frightened me. 'We'll be out in a shot!' they replied, and in a minute the kitchen was empty. One day as I was going to my brother's, a sentinel called to a man who was with me not to advance on pain of being shot. The sentinel was my former friend, 'The Canny.' I approached, and asked him if he would shoot me if I proceeded? 'Shoot *you!*'

exclaimed he, taking my hand and kissing it, adding an eulogium on the Quakers. I told him it would be well if they were all of our way of thinking, for then there would be no such work as the present."

Relief came when the 9th Dragoons appeared galloping along the high road from Carlow. Mary Leadbeater says :—" We saw the military descend the hill, cross the bridge, and halt before our house, when some dismounted, and entered asking for milk and water. As I handed it, I trembled. The dragoon perceived my emotion, and kindly told me I was not to fear, that they came to protect us, adding, ' It is well you were not all murdered.' "

It was long before the village recovered from this wave of disaster.

Mary Leadbeater was more successful with her prose than her poetry. Her " Cottage Dialogues," for which a London publisher gave her £50, is a very useful little book. Her two women, Rose and Nancy, talk together as Irish peasants do talk ; Nancy is the careless, idle one, and Rose the industrious, frugal housewife. The " Dialogues " had one practical effect, Miss Edgeworth told the author, in making a dirty family of cottagers fill up the holes in their floors. A great compliment was paid to the book by a Connaughtman named Thady Connellan, who proposed translating it into Irish;

Surrounded by her children, her husband, and her relations, Mary Leadbeater passed away, universally beloved and regretted, June 27th, 1826, and is buried in the Quaker burying-ground at Ballitore. She kept up a long correspondence with Mrs. Trench, mother of the Archbishop of Dublin, and the letters which passed between them form a very interesting part of the "Annals of Ballitore," which was not published till 1862, more than thirty years after Mary Leadbeater's death. Her calm benevolent mind was incapable of any thirst for fame, she was contented to go on her peaceful way, happy in herself, and happy in giving joy to others. We, in these restless feverish days, may profitably take a leaf out of her book, and study to be quiet.

Mary Leadbeater's mind was, as one of her friends expressed it, "dipped in the deepest dews of delicacy." She instinctively shrank from all that was harsh, discordant, or uncharitable. Her niece says of her, "When we asked her a question that was not right to answer, she would begin the lines taken from her favourite poem, 'The Maiden's Best Adorning:'—

'The secrets of thy friends do not disclose,
Lest by so doing thou resemble those
Whose ears are leaking vessels, which contain
Nothing: but what's pour'd in runs out again.'"

For children she had a special love. One of her books, "Anecdotes taken from Real Life for the Improvement of Children," did much to brighten the literature provided for youthful Quakers, which had previously been of a very tough description. Nearly a century has passed away since Mary Leadbeater wrote in the peaceful seclusion of Ballitore, and now, as modern motors fly past the quiet village, perhaps some of us may give a thought to the calm, benevolent Quakeress with her spotless white muslin neckerchief and snowy cap, who once stood looking down on the River Griese, dreaming dreams of that far-off Bethel which she now gazes at with undimmed eyes.

V.

The Ladies of Llangollen.

Lady Eleanor Butler, 1739-1829.
Miss Sarah Ponsonby, 1755-1831.

VISITORS to the beautiful little village of Llangollen, in North Wales, cannot fail to be struck by the numerous photographs in the shop windows of two extraordinary figures with short-cropped hair, high hats, starched neckcloths and riding habits. These represent the celebrated Ladies of Llangollen, and their picturesque old house, Plas Newydd, with its treasures of oak carving on porch and staircase, is just above the village. Most people are aware that these two friends, who elected to run away from their respective homes and to spend their lives together, were Irishwomen by birth and education. Lady Eleanor Butler, the elder of the two by sixteen years, was the daughter of Walter, sixteenth Earl of Ormonde, while Miss Sarah Ponsonby was the daughter of Chambré Ponsonby, and niece of Lady Betty Fownes, by whom she was adopted. It has often been said that there is no real friendship between women, but the life-long

friendship between these two ladies, who actually eloped with one another, is a striking proof to the contrary. A short account of their lives may be interesting.

Lady Eleanor Butler, though born at Kilkenny in 1739, was partly educated in France, and she is supposed to have had some love affair there.

She always preserved a pleasant recollection of France, and when she was on her death-bed, at the age of ninety, she insisted upon making Miss Ponsonby, then seventy-four, sit on her bed, and quaver forth the favourite French air, "*Malbrook s' en va t' en guerre.*"

Her home at Kilkenny, where she lived with her mother and sisters, was not congenial to her. She was a strong-minded young woman, born before her time, who liked to have her own way, and here she was kept under discipline after the fashion of that day. For thirty-nine years she endured her fate, and then she formed the idea of retiring to some secluded spot with her friend, Miss Sarah Ponsonby, and living for each other according to their own ideas of happiness. Miss Ponsonby resided in the house of her adopted parents, Sir William and Lady Betty Fownes, at Woodstock, Kilkenny, and during the Parliamentary Session, at 40 Dominick Street, Dublin. She was a tall, graceful girl; she spoke and understood French

and Italian, and sketched well from nature. But there was a skeleton in her closet, for Sir William Fownes, her guardian, persecuted her with his unwelcome attentions, and she was afraid to tell his wife, her aunt, about them. This, however, was kept a profound secret, and was not publicly known till twenty years afterwards by the publication of the diary of a Mrs. Goddard. The two friends consulted together, and resolved on flight. Their first attempt ended in failure, for Miss Ponsonby broke her leg in trying to get over a park wall at an early hour in the morning. She had an appointment to meet Lady Eleanor (then Miss Butler) at a ruined abbey near Thomastown. Here, it is said, they spent the night, and were brought back in disgrace next morning. They made a second attempt to escape in March, 1778, and this time they got as far as the quay at Waterford, when they were again captured, Miss Ponsonby was brought back to Woodstock by Lady Betty Fownes, and Lady Eleanor was sent to her sister, Mrs. Kavanagh, of Borris. In a letter from Mrs. Tighe, Lady Betty Fownes' only daughter, which is given in E. Owen Blackburne's "Illustrious Irishwomen," she says:

"The runaways are caught, and we shall soon see our amiable friend (Miss Ponsonby) again, whose conduct, though it has an appearance

of imprudence, is, I am sure, devoid of serious impropriety. There were no gentlemen concerned, nor does it appear to be anything more than a scheme of romantic friendship. My mother is gone to Waterford for Miss Butler and her, and we expect to see them to-night."

The principal odium of this strange elopement fell on Lady Eleanor, who was the moving spirit throughout. Lady Betty Fownes, in a letter to Mrs. Goddard, says—"We hear the Butlers are never to forgive their daughter, and that she is to be sent to France to a convent. I wish she had been safe in one long ago; she would have made us happy. Many an unhappy hour she has cost me, and, I am convinced, years to Sally" (Sarah Ponsonby).

This young lady herself adds in a postscript—"They propose great terms to Miss B. (Lady Eleanor) if she will reside in a convent some years, and give me up for ever. I am not heroic enough to wish she should accept them. Worn out by misfortunes, I have still the comfort of self-approbation. Were it to do again, I would act as I have done."

Old Sir William Fownes still went on making love to his adopted daughter, to her dismay and misery. One entry in Mrs. Goddard's diary is as follows:—

"I talked again to Miss Pons., not only to

dissuade her from her purpose, but to discharge my conscience of the duty I owed her as a friend by letting her know my opinion of Miss Butler, and the certainty I had that they would never enjoy living together. I spoke of her with harshness and freedom. . . . Sir William joined us, kneel'd, implored, swore twice on the Bible how much he loved her, would never more offend, was sorry for his past folly, that was not meant as she understood it, offer'd to double her allowance of £30 a year, or add what more she pleas'd to it, even tho' she did go. She thanked him for his past kindness, but nothing could hurt her more, or would she be under other obligation to him; said if the whole world was kneeling at her feet it should not make her forsake her purpose. She would live and die with Miss B.; was her own mistress, and if any force was used to detain her she knew her own temper so well, it would provoke her to an act that would give her friends more trouble than anything she had yet done."

Sir William Fownes died of paralysis, and was buried at Innistiogue.

Soon afterwards, the two friends wrung a reluctant consent from their relatives to their project of living and dying together. They set out from Waterford, and arrived at Milford Haven on the 16th May, 1778, accompanied by their faithful servant, Mary Carryl. They wandered

about Wales for some months, and finally they came to Pen-y-Maes, Llangollen, a small cottage, with kitchen, sitting-room, and two bed-rooms; they took a lease of this cottage, and added to it from time to time, changing its name to Plas Newydd.

The valley of the River Dee somewhat resembles the scenery of the County Wicklow in its combination of rushing water and waving woods. But the house in which the ladies lived for fifty years is quite unique—nothing like it can be seen anywhere. The porch is supported by two carved oak bed-posts of Charles I.'s time, black with age. The whole staircase is a mass of carved oak, the banisters being decorated with a squirrel, lion, and mermaid design. Every room was literally crammed with paintings, prints, and carvings; and though the former have been mostly removed, enough are left to show the taste and refinement of the ladies.

They kept a sort of mimic court for visitors, who came to see them from all parts of the world. From Ireland there was a constant stream. A formal letter had to be addressed to the ladies beforehand; this gave time for perfuming the rooms, which was done by pastilles kept in bronze censers. Madame de Genlis and Pamela came to Llangollen in 1791, and slept at Plas Newydd. Madame de Genlis describes

her visit, and the sound of an Æolian harp which was placed on the balcony of her bedroom window. The ill-fated Lord Edward Fitzgerald was a great favourite with the ladies. The carved apes over the mantelpiece in Lady Eleanor's bedroom are supposed to have been his gift, as an ape, with the motto "Crom a Boo," is the crest of the House of Leinster.

The last visit Lord Edward paid to Plas Newydd was early in '98, when he walked over the hills from Brynkinalt (Lord Dungannon's place near Chirk) to see the ladies, who were quite unconscious that a reward of £1,000 was offered by the Crown for his arrest. He had a foreboding that he was watched while at Plas Newydd. He fancied that he saw a shadow pass the front window of the library, and he escaped by the garden window, which is now canopied with rich carved oak, the roof being supported by bed-posts of Charles I.'s time.

When the ladies first went to Llangollen they were not very well off, and Miss Ponsonby's application for money to her kinsman, the Earl of Bessborough, was received with coldness. He sent her £50, and requested her not to send him any presents. Through the influence of the Duke of Wellington, who was their staunch friend, and had been a frequent visitor to Plas Newydd, they got a pension of £200 a year, which made

them comfortable for life, as their expenses were few, and presents from wealthy friends frequent. The Duke of York gave them a magnificent oak chest, and the Duchess of St. Albans contributed various valuable curiosities to their museum. Their Irish servant, Mary Carryl, was a great curiosity; she wore high heels and a stiff dress, using a profusion of hair powder and pomatum. At her death the ladies came in for a legacy of £500, which Mary Carryl left them out of her savings. With this sum the freehold of their cottage was purchased. They planted an avenue of beech and lime trees in pious memory of their loss, and called it Cathedral Walk. If any schoolboys visited them they filled their pockets with apples, saying "when they were schoolboys they were fond of apples."

The comical appearance of the ladies called forth the following description from Charles Mathews, the well-known actor, who was acting at Oswestry, in September, 1823:—

"The dear inseparable inimitables," he writes, "Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, were in the boxes here on Friday. They came twelve miles from Llangollen and returned, as they never sleep from home. Oh, such curiosities! I was nearly convulsed. I could scarcely get on with my part for the first ten minutes my eye caught them. Though I had never seen them I instantly

knew them. As they are seated, there is not one point to distinguish them from men, the dressing and powdering of the hair, their well-starched neckcloths; the upper part of their habits, which they always wear, even at a dinner party, made precisely like men's coats, and black beaver men's hats. They looked exactly like two respectable, superannuated old clergymen. I was highly flattered, as they were never in the theatre before. I have to-day received an invitation to call, if I have time as I pass, at Llangollen, to receive in due form from the dear old gentlemen, Lady E. Butler and Miss Ponsonby, their thanks for the entertainment I afforded them at the theatre."

Charles Mathews could not accept this invitation, but more than a month later he paid his respects to "the ladies" at Porkington. He thus describes his interview:—

"Well, I have seen them, heard them, touched them! The pets—'the ladies' as they are called—dined here yesterday. I mentioned in a former letter the effect they produced upon me in public, but never shall I forget the first burst yesterday upon entering the drawingroom, to find the dear antediluvian darlings, attired for dinner in the same mummified dress, with the Croix de St. Louis, and other orders, and myriads of large brooches, with stones large enough for

snuff-boxes, stuck in their starched neckcloths. . . . They returned home last night, 14 miles, after 12 o'clock! They have not slept one night from home for 40 years. I longed to put Lady Eleanor under a bell-glass. . . ."

The orders worn by Lady Eleanor were chiefly presented to her through the Duke of Orleans, but one (which she prized most) was the Harp and Crown of Ireland, her native country, a loyal badge presented to her by a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. This order, attached by a light blue ribbon, formed a striking feature in fat little Lady Eleanor's appearance. When she lost her sight, the glory of her orders became somewhat dimmed by a coating of melted butter and hair-powder. Among the Irish visitors to "the ladies" was no less a personage than Edmund Burke. In a stately letter to them, he alludes "to the polite and hospitable reception you gave us in your elegant retirement at Llangollen."

William Wilberforce, too, was among their guests, and Wordsworth not only visited them, but wrote a sonnet in their honour, which was composed in the grounds of Plas Newydd. It is as follows:

"A stream to mingle with your favourite Dee,
Along the "Vale of Meditation," flows;
So styled by those fierce Britons, pleased to see
On Nature's face th' expression of repose;

Or, haply, there some pious Hermit chose
To live and die—the peace of heaven his aim,
To whom the wild sequestered region owes
At this last day its sanctifying name.

"Glyn Cyfaillgarwch, in the Cambrian tongue
In ours the Vale of Friendship, let this spot
Be named, where faithful to a low-roofed cot,
On Deva's banks, ye have abode so long;
Sisters in love—a love allowed to climb
Ev'n on this earth, above the reach of time!"

The ladies, who sometimes indulged in writing verses, did not at all approve of this sonnet; they did not like their pretty house to be called "a low-roofed cot," and they said they could write better poetry than this themselves. A curious letter, from Mr. Canning, thanking them for their offer of a quarter of Welsh mutton, ends thus:—

"Mr. Canning's address is 'Foreign Office,' for mutton as well as letters."

After a long and useful life, beloved by the poor, to whom she was a kind and thoughtful benefactress, Lady Eleanor died in her ninetieth year, and two years afterwards Miss Ponsonby followed her to the grave. They are buried in the same tomb at Llangollen churchyard, and long epitaphs record their various perfections. The virtues of

their faithful Irish servant, Mary Carryl, who is buried with them, are also recorded. She is said to have been—"Industrious, patient, faithful, generous, kind"—a goodly roll of qualities. which few servants of the present day can claim.

Such a friendship as existed between Lady Eleanor and Miss Ponsonby would be difficult to find. Their relations predicted that their going away together would end in failure, but these predictions were all falsified—never was a union more perfect, never did two people live in greater harmony. All Lady Eleanor's angularities seem to have been smoothed away, nothing but benevolence and kindness remained. The experiment of living her own life, in her own way, with her own chosen companion, turned out a complete success. And Sarah Ponsonby, who had passed such a troubled youth, found the truest peace and harmony for the rest of her days.

VI.

Maria Edgeworth.

1767-1849.

THE County of Longford is, perhaps, one of the least interesting in Ireland. There are no chains of blue mountains, no wooded glens, no rushing waterfalls, and yet it is to this country, with its flat plains and its vista of bogs, that two of the greatest names in literature belong. It was at Pallas, in the County Longford, that Oliver Goldsmith first saw the light, though the adjoining Westmeath parish of Lissoy, of which his father became soon afterwards curate—"passing rich on forty pounds a year"—was the original of

"Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain."

And Maria Edgeworth, of whom Macaulay said, "that she was the second woman of her age," lived and wrote and died at the family place of Edgeworthstown, also in the County of Longford. Though born out of Ireland, she was to all intents and purposes Irish. So she is always considered, and so she considered

herself. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, the Edgeworths had this estate in Longford. Another brother gave the name of Edgeware to a district in London, which is still preserved in Edgeware road. And the Abbe Edgeworth, who attended the luckless Louis XVI. to the guillotine, was a connection of the Irish Edgeworths. Energy was a dominating characteristic of the race. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the father of Maria, was sent, when a very young man, to Oxford. He had an introduction to a family of Elers, who lived at Black Bourton, in Oxfordshire. There were four pretty daughters, and young Edgeworth, then only nineteen, was captivated by one of them. The young couple took matters into their own hands, and eloped to Gretna Green. Young Edgeworth's father, though violently opposed to the match, very sensibly gave in to the inevitable, and had his son married again by licence. The youthful bridegroom wrote—"I soon found the inconveniences of an early and hasty marriage, but though I heartily repented my folly, I determined to bear with firmness and temper the evils which I had brought on myself."

A son, Richard, was born before the young father was twenty, and a daughter, Maria, the future authoress, was born four years afterwards. Her birth took place at her grandfather's house, Black Bourton, on January 1, 1767. Mr.

Edgeworth, who was possessed with extraordinary mental activity, took a house at Hare Hatch in Berkshire, and began to invent various mechanical contrivances, and to make schemes for the good of his native country of Ireland. He claimed to be the first inventor of the telegraph. His daughter, Maria, was sent to school at Derby, when she was only eight years old. Her own mother died in 1773, and four months afterwards, her father married a second time, Miss Honora Sneyd, who seems to have been a perfect prodigy of excellence, both in body and mind. Her married life was short, for she died of consumption in 1780, and by her dying advice Mr. Edgeworth married her sister, Elizabeth. At the age of fifteen Maria Edgeworth, who had only been in Ireland on short visits, now returned with the rest of the family, to take up a permanent abode at Edgeworthstown, and, except on brief visits and tours abroad, she never left it for any length of time. Her father was in the habit of making her write short compositions, which he corrected himself. One time he told her to write a tale on the subject of "Generosity." When the tale was sent to him his remark was, "An excellent story, and extremely well-written, but where is the generosity?" That important part had been overlooked.

Maria was already beginning to plan out sketches

for stories. Edgeworthstown was crowded daily by all sorts and conditions of oddities, agents, middlemen, pipers, strollers, and professional beggars. She says—"I remember a number of literary projects, or *aperçus* (suggestions) of things which I might have written if I had time or capacity to do so." Then followed her father's advice—and very good advice it was—"Maria, either follow out a thing clearly to a conclusion, or do not begin it. Begin nothing without finishing it."

As the third Mrs. Edgeworth added nine children to the six that were already at Edgeworthstown there was now a large family party, and a boy, Henry, was specially given over to Maria's charge. For these children she wrote many of her early tales—the "Purple Jar," "Lazy Lawrence," and "Simple Susan," of which last story Sir Walter Scott said, "That when the boy brings back the lamb to the little girl, there is nothing for it but to sit down and cry."

Slight though these stories are, there is always a shrewd perception of character in them, together with a sense of humour which make them pleasant reading to old as well as young. Miss Edgeworth is nothing if not a moral teacher, but the moral is taught by example, not by prosy homilies. In all her early tales the virtues of industry, economy, punctuality, truthfulness,

and thrift are illustrated; while the contrary bad habits of laziness, idleness, falsehood, waste, and dishonesty are shown up in strong relief. How the busy household at Edgeworthstown was employed at this time may be seen from one of Miss Edgeworth's early letters, written on a fair day, "well proclaimed to the neighbourhood by the noise of pigs squeaking, men bawling, women brawling, and children squealing."

"I will tell you what is going on," says Maria Edgeworth to her cousin, Miss Sophy Ruxton, of Black Castle, "that you may see whether you like our daily bill of fare. . . . There is a balloon hanging up, and another going to be put on the stocks, there is soap making, and to be made, from a receipt in Nicholson's Chemistry, there is excellent ink made, and to be made by the same book, there is a cake of roses just squeezed in a vice, there is a set of accurate weights, just completed by the ingenious Messrs. Lovell and Henry Edgeworth, partners, for Henry is now a junior partner, and grown an inch and a-half upon the strength of it in two months."

All the family was tinctured with a taste for mechanics.

Mr. Edgeworth's plan of education with his numerous children was not so much to teach them, as to show them best how to teach themselves. It worked so well that he said, "I do

not think one tear per month is shed in this house, not the voice of reproof heard, nor the hand of restraint felt."

In the summer of 1791, Maria Edgeworth was left in sole charge of this houseful of children, while her father and stepmother were at Clifton. The stories that she then wrote for her brothers and sisters were written on a slate, and read out in the evening, to be questioned on. Their merits were judged by the interest they excited.

She had to personally conduct the large family over to England, the sea-passage from Dublin to Holyhead taking no less than thirty-three hours, and only one passenger besides themselves!

Maria Edgeworth's first published work was "Letters to Literary Ladies," which has long passed into the region of forgetfulness. It came out in 1795, and the year afterwards the first volume of her Tales appeared, those Tales which were soon to become the delight of every schoolroom and nursery throughout the kingdom. The title given to the volume by Mr. Johnson was the unpromising one of "The Parents' Assistant," but children soon forgot the title in the delights of the "Purple Jar" and "Lazy Lawrence."

Mr. Edgeworth's third wife died in 1797. He said of her that "he had never seen her out of temper, and never received from her an unkind

word or a hasty look." Nevertheless, he speedily looked about for a successor, and found one in Miss Beaufort, daughter of the Vicar of Collon. The marriage took place 31st May, 1798, at St. Anne's Church, Dublin, and Maria wrote to her new stepmother, "You will come into a new family, dear Miss Beaufort, but you will not come a stranger: you will not lead a new life, but only continue to lead the life you have been used to in your own happy cultivated family."

Strange to say, these words were verified to the letter, and Mr. Edgeworth's fourth and last wife brought nothing but harmony into this strangely-constituted home circle. "The more I see of my friend and mother," wrote Maria to her aunt, Mrs. Ruxton, "the more I love and esteem her. I never saw my father at any period of his life appear so happy as he does, and you know that he tastes happiness as much as any human being can. . . . I am going on in the old way writing stories. . . My father has made our little rooms so nice for us, they are all fresh painted and papered. O, rebels! O, French! spare them. We have never injured you, and all we ask is to see everybody as happy as we are ourselves."

Disturbance was in the air—wars and rumours of wars—for it was the terrible year of '98. When the French landed at Killala in August a break

was made in the peaceful home life at Edgeworthstown. Maria says, "We, who are so near the scene of action, cannot by any means discover what number of the French actually landed. Some say 800, some say 1,800, some 18,000, some 4,000. The troops march and counter march, without knowing where they are going, or for what."

On September 5th the alarm was given; the whole family was forced to fly from Edgeworthstown, and to take refuge in an inn at Longford. The Edgeworths returned again on the 9th, and found, as Maria says—"Everything as we had left it five days before—five days which seemed almost a life-time, from the dangers and anxieties we had gone through."

Two years afterwards, in 1800, "Castle Rackrent," the best of Miss Edgeworth's Irish novels, was published anonymously, and soon went into a second edition. The story is told by Thady Quirck, an old retainer of the Rackrent family. The portraits of Sir Murtagh, Sir Kitt, and Sir Condy are full of racy humour. Sir Murtagh had no less than 16 lawsuits pending at a time. Out of 49, he only lost 17, the rest he gained. Of Sir Condy, the last of his name, Thady remarks "he had but a poor funeral after all."

"Castle Rackrent" bears no trace of a feminine hand; it is strong and pithy throughout. Its

successor, "Belinda," is, on the contrary, distinctly a woman's book, mainly dealing with graphic scenes from fashionable life. It says much for Maria Edgeworth's versatility that she could have wrtten in a short time two works of imagination, each excellent in its way, and totally different the one from the other. The "Essay on Irish Bulls" came out in 1803, and was announced as by "R. L. Edgeworth and Maria Edgeworth, author of 'Castle Rackrent.'" A gentleman who was much interested in improving the breed of Irish cattle, sent for this work on Irish Bulls, but threw it away in disgust when he saw what it was, for he had purchased it as Secretary to the Irish Agricultural Society!

"The first design of this book," wrote Miss Edgeworth, "was my father's. He wished to show the English public the eloquence, wit, and talents of the lower classes of people in Ireland. In the chapter on Wit and Eloquence in *Irish Bulls* there is a speech of a poor freeholder to a candidate who asked for his vote; this speech was made to my father when he was canvassing the County of Longford. It was repeated to me a few hours afterwards, and I wrote it down instantly, without, I believe, the variation of a word."

A bull is defined to be "a confusion of ideas, ending in a contradiction of meaning." Imagina-

tive people are specially prone to these blunders, and some of our greatest poets are not exempt from them. Milton says in *Samson Agonistes* :— "The deeds themselves, though *mute*, *speak loud* the giver."

One of the best chapters is that which records the adventures of Phelim O'Mooney, who goes to England under the name of Sir John Bull. Two of the bulls he makes are worth mentioning : "How are ye, my fine fellow ? Can ye see at all with the eye that's knocked out ?" And again, "If the contractors had illuminated in character, it would have been with *dark* lanterns."

In 1803, when Maria Edgeworth was thirty-six, her name had become a household word, and many of her tales had been translated into French. She and her father and step-mother went on a very interesting visit to France and Belgium, and her letters describing her experiences are capital, bright, graphic, and perfectly free from vanity or egotism.

The fourth Mrs. Edgeworth added six more children to the family group, making twenty-two in all, though many did not live to grow up. These children of all ages were voracious for stories, and Maria had a never-failing supply.

Most of her "Popular Tales," belong to this period of her life. Her "Tales of Fashionable Life" included what is generally considered her

masterpiece, "The Absentee." Macaulay pompously declared that one scene in this novel is the best thing written of its kind since the opening of the 22nd Book of the Odyssey. Yet this story, so Mrs. Edgeworth tells us, "was written under the torture of the tooth-ache, and it was only by keeping her mouth full of some strong lotion that Maria could allay the pain, and yet she never wrote with greater spirit and energy." The scene that Macaulay alludes to is that when, unknown to his tenants, the absentee landlord appears among them. The postboy, with his racy remarks, furnishes the comic part of the drama, which reads like a scene from real life, and is as fresh to-day as when it was written. Mr. Edgeworth died in June, 1817, absorbed in his daughter's books to the last. He insisted on her reading "Ormond," the story she was then engaged on, aloud to him. "He could not dine with us," wrote Maria to her aunt, Mrs. Ruxton, "but after dinner he sent for us all to the library. He sat in the arm-chair by the fire—my mother in the opposite arm-chair, Pakenham on the chair behind her, Francis on a stool at her feet, William next, Lucy, Sneyd, on the sofa opposite the fire, Honora, Fanny, Harriet, and Sophy, my aunts (the Miss Sneyds, sisters to the second and third Mrs. Edgeworth), and Lovell between them and the sofa." Would not this

picturesque family group make a study for a painter ?

Something must be said as to Maria Edgeworth's outward woman. Mrs. S. C. Hall describes her vividly, and this description is worth quoting here. "In person, she was very small, she was lost in a crowd, her face was pale and thin, her features irregular, they may have been considered plain, even in youth, but her expression was so benevolent, her manners so perfectly well-bred—partaking of English dignity and Irish frankness—that one never thought of her with reference either to beauty or plainness. She ever occupied, without claiming, attention, charming continually by her singularly pleasant voice, while the earnestness and truth that beamed from her bright blue, very blue eyes, increased the value of every word she uttered. She knew how to listen as well as to talk, and gathered information in a manner highly complimentary to those from whom she sought it . . . her sentences were frequently epigrammatic, she more than ever suggested to me the story of the good fairy from whose lips dropped diamonds and pearls whenever they were opened. She was ever neat and particular in her dress—a duty of society that literary women sometimes culpably neglect. Her feet and hands were so delicate and small as to be almost childlike. In a word, Maria

was one of those women who do not seem to require beauty." The one love-affair of Maria Edgeworth's life took place during one of her visits to Paris, when she had reached the mature age of thirty-five. Her admirer was a Swede, Monsieur Edelcrantz by name. She herself treated the affair lightly in her letters, but Mrs. Edgeworth said, "She refused M. Edelcrantz, but she felt much more for him than esteem or admiration; she was exceedingly in love with him. Mr. Edgeworth left her to decide for herself, but she saw too plainly what it would be to us to lose her, and what she would feel at parting with us. She decided rightly for her own future happiness and for that of her family, but she suffered much at the time, and for long afterwards. While we were at Paris, I remember that in a shop where Charlotte and I were making purchases, Maria sat apart absorbed in thought, and so deep in reverie that when her father came in and stood opposite to her, she did not see him till he spoke to her, when she started and burst into tears. Even after her return to Edgeworthstown, it was long before she recovered the elasticity of her mind. 'Leonora,' which she began immediately after our return home, was written with the hope of pleasing the Chevalier Edelcrantz. It was written in a style that he liked, and the idea of what he would think of it was, I

believe, present to her in every line she wrote. She never heard that he had even read it. He never married. I do not think Maria repented her refusal or regretted her decision. She was well aware that she could not have made him happy, that she would not have suited his position at the court of Stockholm, and that her want of beauty might have diminished his attachment. . . . The lessons of self command which she inculcates in her works were really acted upon in her own life. The resolution with which she devoted herself to her father and his family, and the industry with which she laboured at the writings which she thought were for the advantage of her fellow-creatures, were from the exertion of the highest principle."

After her father's death, Maria had to accomplish the difficult task of writing his life, and to make the task more arduous, she was suffering acutely from weak eyes. A visit to France with two of her younger sisters restored her to her usual good spirits and activity. She very characteristically observes :—" Certainly no people can have seen more of the world than we have done in the last three months. By seeing the world, I mean seeing varieties of characters and manners, and being behind the scenes in many different societies and families. The constant chorus as we drive home together is, ' How happy

we are to be so fond of each other! How happy we are to be so independent of all we see here! How happy that we have our own dear home to return to.'"

Moore, who met Miss Edgeworth at Bowood, the Marquis of Lansdowne's, says "Miss Edgeworth is delightful, not from display, but from repose and unaffectedness, the least pretending person of the company."

Byron thought her a "nice unassuming Jeanie Deans-looking body—as we Scotch say, and if not handsome, certainly not ill-looking. Her conversation was as quiet as herself; one would never have guessed she could write her name."

Between Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott there was something more than friendship. He acknowledged in the Preface to Waverley that "without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, the pathetic tenderness and admirable tact which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind as that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland."

A visit to Abbotsford in 1823 was a memorable event in Maria Edgeworth's life. Sir Walter had to show her Thomas the Rhymer's glen, the magic scenes of Yarrow and fair Melrose. There was a picnic by St. Mary's Loch, and a return to

Abbotsford beneath the softest of harvest moons. The visit was returned when Sir Walter visited Ireland in 1824. Mr. Lovell Edgeworth threw open the doors of Edgeworthstown to the Scott party. On going through the village, Lockhart remarks, "We found neither mud hovels nor naked peasantry, but snug cottages and smiling faces all about. . . . In Maria, Scott hailed a sister spirit. . ."

Years passed and found Maria Edgeworth still at work, still surrounded by a happy family party, It was her habit to get up at seven, take a cup of coffee, read her letters, and then walk out for about three quarters of an hour, She generally returned with her hands full of flowers, that she had gathered on her walk, and taking her needlework or knitting, would sit down to the family breakfast. Her writing was all done in the common sitting-room or library, a large and spacious room, well stored with books. Mrs. S. C. Hall, says that "an oblong table is a sort of rallying-point for the family, while Miss Edgeworth sits quietly and abstractedly in her own peculiar corner on the sofa; her desk, upon which lies Sir Walter Scott's pen, given to her by him when in Ireland, is placed before her on a little quaint table. In the same corner, and upon that table, she has written nearly all that has delighted the world.

A very large family-party assembles daily in this charming room. Mr. Francis Edgeworth has a family of little ones who seem to enjoy the freedom of the library as much as their elders. To set these little people right if they are wrong: to rise from the table to fetch them a toy, to save a servant a journey, to fetch a volume that escapes all eyes but her own, are hourly employments of this most unspoiled and admirable woman. She will then resume her pen."

Her novel of "Helen," the last she wrote, shows no lessening of power, though perhaps it appeals more to women than to man. It was written with the object of showing that the slightest deviation from truth is sure to lead to endless misfortunes. Of Maria Edgeworth's writings, the following clever epigram appeared:—

We everyday bards may anonymous sign,
That refuge, Miss Edgeworth, can never be thine,
Thy writings, where satire and morals unite,
Must bring forth the name of their author to light,
Good and bad join in telling the source of their birth,
The bad own their Edge, and the good own their Worth!

Her busy useful life came to an end at last; she died at Edgeworthstown on the 21st May, 1849, at the age of 82. Forty-eight books are credited

to her, including those she wrote in partnership with her father. She had a great dislike to having her life written, and used to say that "the only remains she wished to leave behind would be in the churchyard at Edgeworthstown." Yet within the last ten years, a biography written, for private circulation, by her step-mother, with many of Maria's letters, was edited by Mr. Augustus Hare, and published by Mr. Edward Arnold. From this interesting book, some extracts have been taken, principally from Miss Edgeworth's own letters.

Many generations have passed since her Tales were the delight of thousands of readers, but certainly some of them are bound to live, and will live.

A very strong testimony to their merits was given by the late Mr. W. H. Lecky, the historian, who said that he found Miss Edgeworth's novels invaluable in giving a truthful picture of the manners and habits of the eighteenth century.

We, of the present day, may well take a lesson from this practical and business-loving woman. The agency business of the Edgeworth estate, that she took up of her own free will, engrossed her. She herself looked after the repairs, the letting of the village houses, the drains, gutters,

and pathways. "From the rent-book," her step-mother tells us, "she went to her little desk. She never wrote fiction with more life and spirit than when she had been for some time completely occupied with the hard realities of life."

Public Library

Photograph by] [*F. Hollyer.*

LADY MORGAN.

BY BERTHON.

VII.

Lady Morgan.

("The Wild Irish Girl,")

1783-1859.

IF anyone might be considered to belong to Dublin, it is Lady Morgan. She was born in Dublin, her childhood and girlhood were spent there; she went to school at Clontarf; her first novel was published by Mr. Brown, of Grafton Street, and the greater part of her married life was spent at 35 Kildare Street. She is numbered among the notabilities of her native city in Charles Lever's well-known lines—

"Och, Dublin, sure, there is no doubtin',
Bates ivery city on the say;
'Tis there you find O'Connell spoutin',
And Lady Morgan makin' tay!"

She tells us in her Autobiography that she was born on a certain Christmas morning—she absolutely refuses to give the year, adding, "dates, what has a woman to do with dates? I mean to

have none of them;" but other biographers have been less merciful, and the year 1783 is generally fixed as that of her birth.

Her father, Robert Owenson, was descended on his mother's side from the family of Sir Malby Crofton, of Longford House, Sligo. Miss Crofton eloped with a stalwart young farmer, and was consequently "cut" by her own relations. Her only son, Robert, inherited from her a very beautiful voice, and a rich Galway Squire, Mr. Blake, took such an interest in him that he brought him to London, and had him taught music under the celebrated composer, Dr. Arne. Owenson, who was a handsome young man with a commanding presence, was bitten by a mania for the stage, but failed to make much impression as an actor, though he sang, and danced an Irish planxty in the character of Teague with great success. He married Miss Jane Hill, of Shrewsbury, who was his exact opposite in every respect, an ardent disciple of Lady Huntingdon, and with a perfect horror of the stage. Nevertheless, when her husband was offered the deputy managership of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, he eagerly accepted it, and did not tell his wife until after the articles had been signed. Mrs. Owenson found some consolation in her exile by visiting a friend of hers, the wife of a Wesleyan minister, who lived at Portarlington. It was after one of these visits, that she and her two

children, Sydney and Olivia, drove up the ascent towards Fishamble street on a dreary winter's evening. Here, Mr. Owenson, who had quarrelled with his patron, Mr. Daly, was reconstructing a theatre. Everything was in confusion; they crossed a long plank that shivered over an open pit, where some remnants of velvet seats were still to be detected, and then, through mounds of chips and sawdust, they reached a large room.

"This will be the green-room," announced Mr. Owenson, "and in this room, my dear Jenny, Handel gave his first concert of the Messiah."

Sydney was all eagerness to ask questions, and among other things she wanted to know if Handel was a carpenter. After passing a terrible place called the Death Chamber, where the floor had given way, they found a large square open space, lit by a real moon, and, here, surrounded by pastoral scenery, they sat down to a supper of beefsteaks and punch.

The rats were only kept away by wild cats, "with stings in their tails," and Molly, the children's maid, was frightened in the night by her fellow-servant exclaming, "Are ye awake, Mrs. Molly? The rots (rats) are draggin' the bed from under me!"

The two little girls, after their mother's death, were sent to a French school at Clontarf, kept by a Madame Tersen. They were taken into a room

with desks and black-boards, and left alone with two other girls, who stared at them stonily. One of them broke silence by asking, "What is your name?" "Sydney Owenson," was the answer. "My name," observed the questioner, "is Mary Anne Grattan, and my papa is the greatest man in Ireland."

Quick-witted Sydney, not to be outdone, promptly responded, "My papa is free of the six and ten per cents!"

After remaining three years at Madame Tersen's, the two Owensons were sent to a finishing school kept by a Mrs. Anderson, who had been governess at the Marquis of Drogheda's. Their kind-hearted father was content to wear a shabby coat as long as his girls were well educated. What Sydney calls "her flimsy, fussy, flirty Celtic temperment" now began to assert itself. She was extremely small in stature, with black curls, cut in a crop, while Olivia was fair, with lovely golden hair, but then Sydney had a jaunty little air of her own, as she remarks with satisfaction, peculiarly Irish. She could sing, dance, speak French, play the Irish harp, and already she had shown signs of literary ability, for her poems, written between the age of twelve and fourteen, had been printed at her father's expense. One of her ballads is likely to live longer than her novels, the well-known "Kate Kearney." It has all the qualities of a true

ballad—simplicity, lightness, and grace. The two first verses are worth quoting here—

Oh, did you not hear of Kate Kearney,
She lives on the banks of Killarney ;
From the glance of her eye,
Shun danger and fly,
For fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney !

For that eye is so modestly beaming,
You ne'er think of mischief she's dreaming
Yet, oh, I can tell
How fatal's the spell
That lurks in the eyes of Kate Kearney !

A serious crisis came when Mr. Owenson was compelled to fly from his creditors, and to leave his two little girls in lodgings at St. Andrew Street, under the care of faithful Molly. And now Sydney's independence of character and indomitable energy asserted themselves.

"I am resolved," she wrote to her "dearest sir, and most dear papa," "to relieve you and earn money for you, instead of spending the little you have for sometime to come. . . I have two novels nearly finished, the first is "St. Clair," I wrote it in imitation of Werther, which I read in school holidays last Christmas. The second is a French novel, suggested by reading Memoirs of

the Duke de Sully, and falling very much in love with Henri IV. Now, if I had time and quiet, I am sure I could sell them, and observe, sir, Miss Burney got three thousand pounds for Camilla, but all this will take time."

It is sometimes stated that Sydney Owenson appeared on the stage, but she certainly says nothing of this herself: She mentions that her father often told his girls that he would rather see them picking cockles than be the first *prima donnas* in Europe. She looked out for a situation as governess or companion to young ladies, and was finally engaged by Mrs. Fetherstonhaugh, of Bracklin Castle. She made her first appearance under very comical circumstances. A little *bal d'adieu* had been given in her honour by her French dancing master, Monsieur Fontaine. Attired in a white muslin frock, with pink silk shoes and stockings, she was dancing a country dance with a very nice young man to the tune of "Money in both pockets," when the horn of the stage coach was heard in the street. There was no time to change her dress, a warm cloak was thrown over her by Molly, a bonnet was hastily tied under her chin, and she was thrust into a corner of the coach. When she reached her destination, she found that her bundle and portmanteau had gone on in the Kinnegad mail, and she had to make her *entrée* before her employers in the white muslin

frock, and the pink shoes and stockings! Was ever a governess in such a plight? But light-hearted Sydney soon got over it, and ended by dancing a jig next evening in the back hall.

Many were her adventures and many were the odd pranks she played, but they would take too long to relate here. She finished her first novel, however, and when the Fetherstonhaughs went to their town house in Dominick Street, she brought it with her. One fine morning, she borrowed the cook's cloak and bonnet, and set out, with the precious MS. under her arm. She relates how she wandered on and on, until she came to Henry Street. Here she stopped, for she saw the name of "T. Smith, Printer and Bookseller," over the door. After some delay, a good-humoured, middle-aged man, with his face half shaved and a razor in one hand, appeared, and the following conversation, as told by the authoress herself, took place :—

"I want to sell a book, please."

"To sell a book, dear? An ould one, for I sell new books myself. What is it about and what is the name of it?'

I was now occupied in taking off the rose-coloured ribbon with which I had tied my manuscript.

"What, it's a manuscript, is it?" cried Mr. Smith.

"The name, sir," I said, "is 'St. Clair.'"

"Well, now, my dear, I have nothing to do

with church books, neither sermons nor tracts, do you see ? "

" Sir, it is one of sentiment, after the manner of Werther."

" Well, my dear, I have never heard of Werther, and, you see, I don't publish novels at all."

The little authoress, hot, hungry, tired, and mortified, began to tie up her manuscript again with tears in her eyes. Good-natured Mr. Smith said—

" Don't cry, dear, there's money bid for you yet."

When he heard that her name was Owenson, it turned out that her father was one of his greatest friends.

" Will I recommend you to a publisher ? "

" Oh, sir, if you would be so good ! "

" To be sure I will."

A letter to Mr. Brown, of Grafton Street was written, and with this Sydney again set forth. She found Mr. Brown at breakfast, but he consented that his reader should look at the novel. She left no address, and during her next visit to Dublin, when she happened to take up a book that was lying on a window seat, she found that it was her own " St. Clair !" Four copies were presented to her. The book was afterwards rewritten and published in England, and had the honour of being translated into German.

Her second situation was in the North of Ireland, in the family of Mr. Crawford, of Fortwilliam. Here she had plenty of singing, dancing, and amusement. Yet, all the same, she found time to write another novel—"The Novice of St. Dominic," in six volumes. This she took to London herself, and contrived to throw such a glamour over the publisher, Sir R. Phillips, of Paternoster row, that he agreed to publish it, though he insisted that it should be reduced from six volumes to four. She was paid for it, too, and with part of the profits she bought an Irish harp, and a black mode cloak, Her next novel "The Wild Irish Girl," was her first real success. In it she did not try to imitate Goethe, or anyone else, she found her own voice, and the wild Irish Girl, though she is called Glorvina, Princess of Innismore, is no other than the volatile Sydney herself. She became known among her friends as "Glo," or Glorvina. The plot of the novel was taken from an incident in her own career. The hero, a penniless young man, is persuaded by his father to give up Glorvina, and the father, who goes to see the dangerous young lady, falls into her snares himself. After some bargaining Phillips paid £300 for "The Wild Irish Girl," and during a visit to London, the little authoress was fêted and flattered to her heart's content. At Lady Cook's reception, Sydney allows that she was so overcome with nervousness as to be

hardly able to ascend the marble staircase, with its gilt balustrades. She was now taken up by the Marchioness of Abercorn, who insisted on her staying with her as an amusing companion. Meanwhile, pretty Olivia Owenson had married Dr. Clarke, afterwards knighted by the Lord Lieutenant. As her father lived with the Clarkes, Sydney had no home ties. Lady Abercorn had a clever house physician, Dr. Morgan, who was soon head over ears in love with the Wild Irish Girl. She liked flirting with him, but she did not want to settle down, she wanted to shake her black curls,to sing, flirt and dance. But destiny was too strong, Lady Abercorn insisted that she must come upstairs, and be married by the chaplain. This was done, and never did a marriage turn out more happily. Sir Charles (for Dr. Morgan had been knighted shortly before) was unceasing in his love and admiration for "the dear, bewitching, deluder-ing siren"; he had patience with her oddities, and she had great respect and affection for him. They spent the first year of their married life at Baronscourt, and then migrated to a house of their own at Kildare Street. Here Lady Morgan wrote her best-known novels—"O'Donnel" and "Florence MacCarthy"—both stories of Irish life. Her Irish servants are always good, and her fine ladies of fashion—taken from her aristocratic friends and patronesses—are most amusing. Her

"snug little nut-shell" of a house was the rallying place for all that was best and brightest in Dublin Society. Moore records in his diary that he dined there. He says (April 21, 1823)—"Dined at Lady Morgan's. Company, Lords Cloncurry and Dunsany, old Hamilton Rowan, and Burne, the barrister. The style of the dinner quite *comme il faut.* In the evening, a most crowded soirée—Ladies Cloncurry, Cecilia La Touche, Catalani came late." Another time he relates that "he dined with the Morgans, no one but themselves at dinner, and a large party in the evening, the party a very pretty one, a great many beauties, and some of Rossini's things sung very well by the Clarkes (Lady Morgan's "harmonious nieces"). I sang also, and with no ordinary success."

Lady Morgan prided herself on her cooking. She says, "I dressed half the dinner myself, which everybody allowed was excellent. It matters little how great dinners should be dressed, but small ones should be exquisite."

Lady Morgan, as a woman of society, is described by Dr. Maginn in the following lines—

And dear Lady Morgan, see, see, how she comes,
With her pulses all beating for freedom like drums.
So Irish, so modest, so mixtish, so wild,
So committing herself, when she talks like a child;
So trim, yet so easy, *petite* yet big-hearted,
That truth and she, try all she can, won't be parted!

When Lady Morgan wished to give an impromptu evening party, she used to throw up the windows of the drawingroom, and invite her friends, as they passed, to come in and join the revel.

Vain and volatile as she was, society was a necessity to her. She lived on praise.

Besides her novels, she wrote a Life of Salvator Rosa, two huge volumes on France and two on Italy. Her work on France came out just after the battle of Waterloo, and created a great sensation, though it was called by Croker in the *Quarterly Review* "an impudent lie!" It sold so well that Colburn offered her £2,000 for a book of the same kind on Italy. She spent many months both in France and Italy collecting materials. As usual, she took about with her a little case containing her Irish harp. A French lady, who came to see her, fixed her eyes on it and said—"It is a little dead child, is it not?" Lady Morgan lifted up her hands in horror at the idea, and the French lady remarked—"Ah, madame, you English are so odd!" She was fully convinced that Lady Morgan was bringing her dead child to bury it at Père La Chaise.

The lucky authoress bought a charming straw hat in Paris, with poppies in it, and, with her French grey cashmere and her coquetry, which she says, "will go with me to my grave," she thought herself irresistible. Great, then, was

her dismay to find that a most grotesque figure of a lady, any age after seventy, was posing at the window in rouged cheeks, powdered hair, and a dress of damask silk with scarlet flowers, as Lady Morgan, "who had written so well about French Industries." This was too much, and elicited the exclamation—"*I am* the real Lady Morgan!"

Publishers were invariably liberal to the "Wild Irish Girl." Colburn was so delighted at reading the proofs of "Florence MacCarthy," that he sent her a beautiful *parure* of amethysts—necklace, cross, and brooch. She was as nimble with her hands as she was with her brains. She writes to her sister, Lady Clarke, from London—"I have made myself a very pretty dress with my own two hands—white satin, with a deep lace flounce. With the skirt I got on beautifully, but as to the corsage, fortunately there is hardly any, what there is, being covered with frills, falls, and lace, so it does not signify how the body is made. Over the flounce is a rouleau of satin, which you make with a quarter of a pound of lamb's wool."

In 1837 she was granted a Government pension of £300 a year, and soon afterwards she persuaded Sir Charles to leave Dublin, and to take a house in London. One who saw her in her prime thus describes her appearance at a Dublin Drawingroom:

—"Hardly more than four feet high, with a slightly curved spine, uneven shoulders and eyes, Lady Morgan glided about in a close cropped wig, bound by a fillet of gold, her face all animated, and with a witty word for everyone. I afterwards saw her at the dress circle of the theatre. She was cheered enthusiastically. A red Celtic cloak, fastened by a rich gold fibula or Irish Tara brooch, imparted to her little ladyship a gorgeous and withal a picturesque appearance."

Sir Charles Morgan died in 1843, and she never quite got over her loss. They had their little tiffs, for whenever they went to a party she always wanted to stop longer, and he wanted to come home sooner, but she settled the matter by singing songs in the carriage, and nothing really marred the harmony between them.

At a musical party on St. Patrick's Day, 1859, Lady Morgan waved her green fan for the last time. She caught cold and died on the 16th April in the same year. She is buried in Brompton Cemetery.

Lady Morgan was Irish of the Irish. She never wrote so well as she did about her own people. Her fun was infectious; she thoroughly enjoyed her own jokes. When she was writing "Florence MacCarthy" she laughed so heartily over it, that her husband started up, exclaiming—

"Good heavens, Sydney, what is the matter?"

"Well," she replied, "Old Crawley is so amusing. I can't help laughing."

This, perhaps, accounts for its success. What touches the author, generally touches the public also.

VIII.

Mrs. Tighe.

Author of "Psyche."

1772-1810.

IT is a remarkable fact that hardly anything is known in Ireland about Mrs. Tighe, and yet she is doubly interesting from her wonderful beauty, as well as from her poem of "Psyche," which won the highest praise from competent critics. It was called "pure, polished, sublime, the out-pourings of an untrammelled soul, yearning to be freed from its uncongenial surroundings."

Sir James Mackintosh—no mean judge—pronounced the last three cantos to be "of surpassing beauty, and beyond all doubt the most faultless series of verses ever produced by a woman."

And yet if nine-tenths of the people, even in Wicklow—that county which inspired many of the descriptions in "Psyche"—were asked what they knew about Mrs. Tighe, of Rosanna, the answer would be "Nothing at all!" When William Howitt visited Ireland, in order to add the name

Photograph by] [*T. F. Geoghegan.*

MRS. TIGHE.

LIBRARY OF THE

of Mrs. Tighe to his book on "The Homes and Haunts of the Poets," he was unsuccessful in gaining any details of her life. Her portrait, painted by George Romney—that painter of so many beautiful women—remains to us, and was engraved in the octavo edition of "Psyche," published in 1811, just after her death. Gazing at that exquisitely lovely face, which recalls the classical models of ancient Greece, we are reminded by Byron's well-known lines :—

> She walks in beauty, like the night,
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
> And all that's good of dark or bright
> Meet in her aspect and her eyes,
> Thus mellowed to that tender light,
> Which heav'n to gaudy day denies.

The shape of Mrs. Tighe's face in Romney's portrait is a perfect oval, long dark brown tresses fall on her shoulders, and stray across her low but intellectual brow, the deep-blue eyes—very large and pellucid—are raised to heaven. The lower part of the face is exquisitely formed—the mouth a perfect Cupid's bow—the whole expression is sweet, innocent, and refined, though tinged with indescribable sadness.

"Early death was pale upon her cheek," for, after many years of suffering, she died of consumption in her 38th year. She was the child of the Rev.

William Blachford and Theodosia, daughter of William Tighe, of Rosanna, and grand-daughter of John Bligh, first Earl of Darnley, a lineal descendant of Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon. The Rev. William Blachford was a man of considerable property; he was also librarian of Marsh's Library, Dublin, from 1766 till 1773, His father, the Rev. John Blachford, who died in 1748, had been Rector of St. Werburgh's, and Chancellor of St. Patrick's. The Rev. William Blachford was highly thought of as a man of great learning. Three years after his marriage, which took place in 1770, he contracted a malignant fever, which carried him off in the prime of life, leaving his wife with two children—Mary, the future author of "Psyche," born in Dublin, on the 9th October, 1772, and a son. Mrs. Blachford was a good manager, and took such care of her husband's property, that, after giving her children a good education, she was able to hand over to her son, when he came of age, an unincumbered estate, as well as a large sum of ready money. Mrs. Blachford joined the Society of Methodists in 1775, through the influence of her friend, Mrs. Agnes Smith, and a short account is given of her in Crookshank's "Memorable Women of Irish Methodism." Her name is there spelt Blatchford. She spent a large part of her income on charity, and was the foundress of an excellent

institution in Dublin, "The Home of Refuge for Unprotected Female Servants."

Her daughter, Mary, beautiful, gifted, and highly-connected, was, at an early age, the centre of attraction at the Viceregal Court. In 1793, when she was just 21, she married her cousin, Mr. Henry Tighe, of Rosanna, County Wicklow. The marriage was not a happy one. Mrs. Tighe was, perhaps, too much engrossed in dreams and visions to be fit for the stern realities of married life. Soon after her marriage, she went with her husband, who was a barrister of the Middle Temple, to London, and mixed a good deal in society. A few years subsequently, her poem of "Psyche" was printed for private circulation. It is an allegory, written in the Spenserian metre, with now and then a touch that reminds one of the Fairy Queen.

Venus, jealous of the beauty of Psyche, sends her son, Cupid, to the earth, who straightaway falls in love with the nymph himself. There is the radiant isle of pleasure, the fatal curiosity, which sends Psyche, weeping and wandering, through the forests of her earthly penance, where she meets the mysterious knight, Constans. Psyche is betrayed by Vanity and Flattery to Ambition; she has to go through the bower of Loose Delight, to encounter the attacks of Slander; to pass through the court of Spleen and the drear Island of In-

difference, till at last come her final triumph and apotheosis.

The writing of this poem was a never-failing joy to Mrs. Tighe. She calls it—

> Delightful vision of my lonely hours,
> Charm of my life, and solace of my care.

Sitting in a chestnut bower at Rosanna, which still may be seen, these thrilling scenes of an imaginary world passed before her mind's eye. She was little more than a girl, but so wedded to the airy fabric of her dreams that she could think of little else. When William Howitt made a pilgrimage to Rosanna he thus described it, "All the way from Dublin to Rosanna is through a rich and lovely district. It is a gold district, much gold being found in its streams. As you approach Rosanna, the hills become higher, and your way lies through the most beautiful wooded valleys. At the inn at Ashford Bridge, you have the celebrated Devil's Glen on one hand and Rosanna on the other. This glen lies a mile or more from the inn; it is narrow; the hills on either side are lofty, bold, craggy, and along the bottom, runs deep and dark over its rocky bed, the River Vartry.

"Rosanna is, indeed, eminently beautiful. The house is a plain old brick house, fit for a country squire. It lies low in the meadow near the river, and around it on both sides of the

water the slopes are dotted with the most beautiful and luxuriant trees. The highway, as you proceed towards Rathdrum, is completely arched over with magnificent beeches, presenting a fine natural arcade. It is a region worthy of the author of 'Psyche.'"

In one of her poems, Mrs. Tighe, addresses the Vartry—

Sweet are thy banks, oh, Vartry, when at morn
Their velvet verdure glistens with the dew,
When fragrant gales, by softest zephyrs borne
Unfold the flowers, and ope their petals new.

Journeys were frequently made from Rosanna to Woodstock, the residence of Mrs. Tighe's brother-in-law, and the place where she died. Woodstock is equally beautiful, though in a different way, The house stands on the top of a hill,and commands lovely views of the valley below. When at Rosanna, Mrs. Tighe might go through the region of Glendalough, or descend into the Vale of Ovoca.

The first edition of "Psyche" came out in 1805, and was received with a chorus of praise. Moore addressed the following lines "To Mrs. Tighe on reading her 'Psyche'":—

Tell me the witching tale again,
For never has my heart or ear
Hung on so sweet, so pure a strain,
So pure to feel, so sweet to hear.

Say, love, in all thy spring of fame,
When the high heaven itself was thine,
When piety confess'd the flame,
And ev'n thy errors were divine,

Did ever muse's hand so fair,
A glory round thine temple spread ;
Did ever life's ambrosial air
Such perfume o'er thine altars shed ?

Writing to his mother on the 22nd August, 1805, Moore says :—"Poor Mrs. Tighe is ordered to Madeira, which makes me despair of her, for she will not go, and another winter will inevitably be her death." She lingered, however, for five years longer, travelling about in search of health, and died at Woodstock on the 24th March, 1810. Two days before her death she said—"I have long struggled with the fear of death, but I can now feel that God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

She is buried in the churchyard of Inistioge, where a monument, attributed to Flaxman, has been erected to her memory. Her death drew forth from Moore the following touching lines :—

I saw thy form in youthful prime,
Nor thought that pale decay
Would steal before the steps of time,
And waste its bloom away, Mary !

Yet still thy features wore that light
Which fleets not with the breath,
And life ne'er look'd more purely bright
Than in thy smile of death, Mary.

But even a more touching tribute to Mrs. Tighe was given by her sister-poet, Mrs. Hemans, who visited her last resting-place, and wrote the lines on "The Grave of a Poetess."

Thou hast left sorrow in thy song—
A voice not loud but deep,
The glorious bow'rs of earth among
How often didst thou weep!

Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground
Thy tender thoughts and high?
Now, peace the woman's heart hath found,
And joy the poet's eye!

Another poem by Mrs. Hemans—

"I stood where the life of song lay low,"

was also inspired by this visit to Inistioge.

After her death, editions of Mrs. Tighe's poem of "Psyche" came out rapidly. Two editions were published in 1811, and a long article in the *Quarterly Review* of May, 1811, gave it high praise. Among other panegyrics it was said "that the verse is melodious, and the tale told with directness and simplicity." A fifth edition was published

in 1816, and it was printed in Philadelphia in 1813. An edition appeared as lately as 1853. It might not be a bad speculation to bring out a new edition at the present time. It would certainly show that the beautiful scenery of the County Wicklow did inspire one poetic mind.

Mrs. Tighe was too much of an idealist to write ballads of her own day ; but one such may be found among her posthumous works. It is the tale of the murder of a loyal yeoman in one of the Wicklow glens during the rebellion of '98, and it shows that her heart did beat for the unfortunate, and did kindle into indignation at injustice done at her very doors. It was said that with the profits of " Psyche," Mrs. Tighe built an addition to the Orphan Asylum at Wicklow, which was afterwards known as the Psyche Ward. I should very much like to know if this is really the case, as another account states that the profits went to the Home of Refuge in Dublin, founded by her mother, Mrs. Blachford. It is very difficult at this distance of time to disentangle the true from the false. It is certain that Mrs. Blachford, who survived her daughter many years, was deeply interested in the Home of Refuge, which she wrote was " prospering beyond her hopes and expectations," and it seems probable that she would have devoted everything she could get to the purpose to which she had given so much of her life and energies.

The story of Mrs. Tighe's life is a sad one, and yet, for a woman who lived at that period, she attained very remarkable success. No one ever gave her a slighting word, or disparaged her work in any way. It was rather over than under-praised. It is impossible to deny that it has great merits. The construction of the verse is never careless or slovenly, the cadences are musical, there is nothing harsh or discordant. For a woman to write an allegorical poem on the subject of love—"such love the purest bosom might confess"—was then rather a hazardous undertaking. The numerous admirers it found proved that Mrs. Tighe did find an audience, and that the verse that cheered her solitude had not been thrown away. And this was something to have lived for.

IX.

Eliza O'Neill

(Lady Becher)

1791-1872.

THE Irish-American actress, Miss Nance O'Neill, has attracted a good deal of attention in London, so that some notice of her famous predecessor, the great Miss O'Neill, whose dramatic power was so extraordinary that she made strong men faint, ought to be of special interest. Eliza O'Neill's phenomenal career which, on the London stage, barely lasted five years, was terminated by her marriage into a most influential and highly respected Irish family, and with her the race of real tragedy actresses was said to expire. Helen Faucit, was, however, one instance that proves the contrary, and this new Miss O'Neill may turn out a worthy successor of the name that once attracted admiring crowds, who hailed the rising star " as a younger and better Mrs. Siddons."

Eliza O'Neill was born at Drogheda in 1791. Her father was stage manager of the Drogheda Theatre, and her mother, whose maiden name was

Photograph by] [*T. F. Geoghegan.*

ELIZA O'NEILL

(LADY BECHER).

Featherstone, was also Irish. They were wretchedly poor, and the whole family—three brothers and two sisters—were all called upon to play various parts in the plays presented. Eliza's first appearance was when she was carried on the stage in her father's arms. The company alternated between Drogheda and Dundalk. The Drogheda Theatre was a ramshackle, tumble-down building, just outside the town, and the Dundalk Theatre was in the Brewhouse. In those days, when travelling was difficult and expensive, people had to rely on provincial talent. Small towns could not have star companies from London with the latest novelty in comic operas. Theatre-goers—and what true Irish person is not a theatre-goer ?—were compelled to patronise native talent, and the growth was sometimes surprisingly good. The shifts that the luckless stage manager had to make in order to cover the deficiencies of scenery and dresses were often ludicrous.

Mr. O'Neill had a brogue, to use the common expression, "so thick that you could cut it." He was fond of boasting of his illustrious descent from Niall of the Nine Hostages, Monarch of Ireland in the fourth century. When he went round the houses of the neighbouring gentry to ask for a bespeak night, he was always invited to take a seat and a glass of wine, if not "a drop of the crather," which was never declined.

At ten years of age little Eliza was acting the part of the young Duke of York to her father's hump-backed Richard. Mr. Talbot, the lessee of no less than three theatres—Belfast, Londonderry, and Newry—happened to see Eliza acting at Drogheda, and was so much impressed by her that he offered her an engagement at Belfast. She insisted that her whole family must be engaged also—"her tail," as they were called.

This was rather a large order, as besides herself there were her father, her three brothers, a sister, and a sister-in-law. They had all had some experience of stage business and she was quite certain that their services could be utilised. At length Mr. Talbot yielded. His faith in the young untried actress was fully justified and the Belfast papers showered praise on her.

After her two years engagement had concluded, she and her family started for Dublin, then a long and perilous journey from the Black North.

How she first appeared on the Dublin stage is told by Mr. Michael Kelly from information supplied by the patentee of Crow Street Theatre. He says that Miss O'Neill arrived in Dublin October, 1811.

The Theatre at Crow Street was on the point of being opened, and a leading favourite, Miss Walstein—known as the Hibernian Siddons—was to take the part of Juliet. Miss Walstein gave

herself great airs, and sent a haughty message to Mr. Jones, the lessee of the theatre, that she would not appear, unless he increased her salary. This he refused to do, saying he would rather shut up the theatre, than comply with her demands. The box-keeper, McNally, then intervened, and told Mr. Jones it would be a pity to close the house, as there was a remedy, if he chose to avail himself of it.

"The girl, sir," said he, "who has been so often recommended to you as a promising actress, is now at an hotel in Dublin, with her father and brother, where they have just arrived, and are proceeding to Drogheda to act at her father's theatre there. I have heard it said by persons who have seen her, that she plays Juliet extremely well, and is very young and very pretty. I am sure she would be delighted to have the opportunity of appearing before a Dublin audience, and if you please, I will make her the proposal."

The proposal was made and accepted, and on the following Saturday, "the girl," who was Miss O'Neill, made her début on the Dublin stage as Juliet. The audience were delighted, and Mr. Jones offered her father and brother very liberal terms, which were thankfully accepted. She took comic parts sometimes, danced very gracefully, and sang a song of Kelly's, originally given by Mrs. Jordan.

But it was her acting as Juliet, especially when in a sudden burst of despair, she exclaimed, "My Romeo is banished," that carried away the audience as if by electricity.

An eye-witness said, "she gives herself up entirely to the impression of circumstances, borne along by the tide of passion. Every nerve is strained, her frame is convulsed, her breath suspended, her forehead knit together. Fate encloses her round and seizes on his struggling victim. She seems formed for scenes of terror and agony."

The disdainful Miss Walstein was compelled to recognise that she had a formidable competitor in public favour to encounter. Soon afterwards, the two actresses had to appear together in a version of Scott's "Lady of the Lake," Miss Walstein being Blanche, and Miss O'Neill the fair Ellen. The two rivals now became known as "the Eagle and the Dove."

Of Eliza O'Neill's personal appearance it has been said "that her beauty seems to have been of the classical type, her features having a Grecian outline, her voice was deep, clear and mellow, her figure was middle-sized and she had a slight stoop in the shoulders which does not seem to have detracted from her grace and dignity." It was during some private theatricals at Kilkenny that she met her future husband, then Mr. William Wrixon Becher. He was one of the actors, and an attach-

ment sprang up between them, but nothing definite was arranged as to marriage, for Miss O'Neill had all her family to support, and, always loyal to them, she would not desert them until they were provided for.

It is generally supposed that Thackeray took Miss O'Neill as the original of Miss Fotheringay in *Pendennis*. It may be remembered that Pendennis in his salad days, falls in love with a beautiful Irish actress, who is acting in a provincial town. But as Thackeray was born in 1811, and Miss O'Neill retired from the stage in 1819, he could only have seen her—if he ever did see her—as a boy of eight. The probability is that he heard a good deal about her from those who had seen her. Miss Fotheringay is, however, a wretched caricature of the great actress, she is vulgar and stupid, she talks of "making a poy," she has no love for her art, and can only go through a few stage tricks into which she has been carefully drilled. This is not like what those most competent to judge have handed down as their estimate of the acting of Miss O'Neill. John Kemble calls her a genius, and the effect of her performance was such that one person was made insane by seeing her act the part of Belvidere in Dublin. But Thackeray's description of Miss Fotheringay's appearance has some resemblance to Eliza O'Neill's, and is worth quoting here—

"Her forehead was vast, and her black hair

waved over it in a natural ripple, and was confined in shining and voluminous braids at the back of a neck, such as you see on the shoulders of the Louvre Venus (that delight of gods and men). Her eyes when she lifted them up to gaze on you, and e'er she dropped her purple deep-fringed lids, shone with mystery and tenderness unfathomable. She never laughed (indeed her teeth were not good) but a smile of endless tenderness and sweetness played round her beautiful lips and in the dimples of her cheeks and her lovely chin. Her nose defied description in those days. Her ears were like two little pearl shells, which the earrings she wore, though the handsomest properties in the theatre, only insulted. But it was her hand and arm that this magnificent creature most excelled in. . . . They surrounded her. When she folded them over her bosom in resignation, when she dropped them in mute agony, or raised them in superb command, when in sportive gaiety her hands waved and fluttered before her like—what shall we say?—like the snowy doves before the chariot of Venus, it was with these hands and arms that she beckoned, repelled, entreated, embraced her adorers, no single one, for she was armed with her own virtue and her father's valour."

This last sentence is indeed true of the fair actress, no stain ever rested on her character. How different from Peg Woffington and Mrs. Jordan!

She might have continued acting in Dublin, if a new turn to affairs had not been given by the arrival of John Kemble, who was engaged as a star to play at Dublin, Cork, and Limerick. This was towards the end of 1813. Miss O'Neill acted with him, and he wrote to his partner in London, his impressions of her :—

"There is a very pretty girl here with a small touch of a brogue on her tongue. She has great talent and some genius; with a little trouble we might make her an object for John Bull's admiration. They call her here the Dove, in contradistinction to her rival, Miss Walstein, whom they designate the Eagle. I recommend the Dove as more likely to please John Bull than the Irish Eagle, who is only a Siddons diluted, and would be only tolerated when Siddons is forgotten. I have sounded the fair lady on the subject of a London engagement. She proposes to append a very long family, a whole clan of O'Neills, to the engagement, to which I have given a decided negative. If she accepts the offer I will sign, seal, and ship herself and clan off from Cork Street. . . . She is very pretty, and so, in fact, is her brogue, which, by the bye, she only uses in conversation, and totally forgets when with Shakespeare and other illustrious companions."

The agreement was signed, for three years, at a salary of from £15 to £17 a week. Her brother

Robert was to be her personal protector and to be allowed free access to the green room. The time for Eliza O'Neill's first appearance at Covent Garden was most propitious. The long and harassing Continental war was at last over, the treaty of Paris had been signed, Napoleon was considered safe at the island retreat of Elba, and an era of peace and plenty seemed to be at hand. It was on the 6th of October, 1814, at the age of twenty-two that the young Irish actress made her curtsey to a London audience as Juliet to the Romeo of Mr. Conway.

A success, wonderful, dazzling, and unexpected, followed. Macready, speaking of her *début*, said, "Her beauty, simplicity, and grace, are the theme of every tongue. The noble pathos of Siddons' transcendant genius no longer serves as the grand commentary and exponent of Shakespeare's text, but in the native elegance, the feminine sweetness, the unaffected earnestness and gushing passion of Miss O'Neill, the stage has received a worthy successor."

It has always been difficult to find an actress who can find a fitting representation of Juliet. Juliet must have youth, extreme youth, and along with this, she must be capable not only of girlish vivacity and joy, but of rising to heights of passion and despair. A daughter of the Sunny South, she flies from one extreme to another, and is carried

away now by a whirlwind of passion, and now by a torrent of agony that is ended only by death. One who was present at Miss O'Neill's first performance in London describes how wonderfully she realised the part :—

" At first she was sportive and natural, a joyous caressing child. Then, when the first touch of love came to her, she changed, in an almost imperceptible manner. Her movements became more voluptuous, her face seemed to alter in expression, it breathed a secret happiness. She expanded, until, like a beautiful flower, she burst into full bloom. By degrees, when sorrow added its crowning and sacred imprint to her passion, she managed to convey to the spectator the most exquisite tenderness. Her despair was heart-breaking . . . her scream was like an electric shock."

Only one critic, Reynolds, the dramatist, ventured a word of disparagement by saying " that her acting was of too boisterous and vehement a character," and he admits that in this opinion he was in a minority.

At the close of the first performance of " Romeo and Juliet," it was announced that the " Merry Wives of Windsor," would be acted the following night, but such a chorus of cries arose of " Juliet ! Juliet ! " that the former play had to be substituted. Nothing succeeds like success, and from

this time Miss O'Neill became the talk of the town, and the theatre was crowded to the doors.

In Moore's Life of Byron we find it recorded that to such lengths did Byron carry his enthusiasm for Kean that "when Miss O'Neill appeared, and by her matchless representations of feminine tenderness attracted all eyes and hearts, he was not only a little jealous of her reputation as interfering with that of his favourite, but in order to guard himself from the risk of becoming a convert, refused to go and see her act. Moore endeavoured to persuade him into witnessing one, at least, of her performances, but his answer was, punning upon Shakespeare's word, "unanneal'd," "No, I am resolved to continue un-o'neiled." (A shockingly bad pun, certainly.)

Moore relates that when travelling in the coach he mentioned to a lady who sat next to him that he had heard Miss O'Neill sing one song lately. She asked, "Was it one of Moore's Irish Melodies?" "Yes." "Which of them?" "One that I believe is called 'Love's Young Dream.'" Moore adds, "I did not avow myself, though we were alone the greater part of the way."

Jane Austen records in one of her letters, "We were all to the play last night, to see Miss O'Neill in Isabella. I took two pocket handkerchiefs, but had little occasion for either. She is an elegant creature, however."

Speaking of Miss O'Neill's acting, Moore says, "I liked her in Lady Townley, but I had never seen it acted before, and I thought she looked so pretty, and so like a woman of fashion that I had much pleasure in the performance, though the critics said her gaiety was not gay enough." Strange to say, that in those very qualities which Irishwomen are supposed to possess, brightness, humour, and fun, Miss O'Neill was singularly deficient, and after several experiments, the managers decided that she should leave comedy alone, and always appear in tragic parts. She cried more naturally than any other actress, her tears seemed to be wrung from her very heart.

In "Venice Preserved," she struck out an original idea of her own. Mrs. Siddons used to stand in the middle of the stage, and say the words "Remember twelve!" in a deep tragic tone. Miss O'Neill walked with slow steps to the door, and stopped for a few minutes, then in a husky whisper, as if the words were choking her, she repeated, "Remember twelve!"—Six bursts of applause told that she had found the right reading of the part.

She acted in Richard Sheil's tragedy of "Adelaide; or, the Emigrants," with great success. Sheil was one of her most devoted admirers, and he relates how, by her dictation, he wrote a refusal of an offer of marriage, made to her by the Earl of Normanby. Such a marriage as this would have

placed a coronet on her brow, but she preferred to remain faithful to the lover who had wooed her, five years before, at Kilkenny. On the 13th July, 1819, she appeared as Mrs. Haller, in "The Stranger." It was announced to be her last appearance in London before Christmas.

She made a very successful tour in Ireland during the summer and autumn of that year. She received upwards of £2,000 for a limited number of appearances in Cork and Dublin, and Mr. Jones, who engaged her, cleared between £2,000 and £3,000 by this transaction. On the 7th August she appeared at Crow Street Theatre, as Mrs. Beverley in "The Gamester," to the Beverley of Charles Kemble. "Venice Preserved," she acted in on the 18th November, at Crow Street, and "The Gamester" was given in the same week by special desire of the Persian Ambassador, who attended in all the glory of his oriental splendour. Her last appearance in Dublin was on the 11th December, when she played Juliet, and Maria in "The Citizen," for her own benefit. Seven days afterwards, on the 18th December, she was married to Mr. William Wrixon Becher, then M.P. for Mallow. The marriage is thus announced in the papers of the day:—

"William Wrixon Becher, Esq., a gentleman of very considerable property, to the lovely and accomplished Miss O'Neill. The ceremony

was performed by the Hon. and Rev. the Dean of Ossory. Mr. Becher settles £1,000 a year on the lady, and refuses to take a shilling of her fortune, which she has settled on her family as follows:—On her father and mother £500 a year, her brother Robert £300 a year, her second brother, in the 44th Regiment, £200 a year, and the sum of £5,000 on her sister."

Altogether, in the course of five years, she had realised the sum of £30,000, and though she was called avaricious, not a penny was kept for herself. So, at the age of eight and twenty, Eliza O'Neill was lost to the stage, and never returned to it, not even in the cause of charity. Soon after the marriage, by the death of his uncle, Mr. Becher succeeded to the baronetcy, and from henceforth the famous actress led the life of a baronet's wife in a pleasant nook in the County Cork, rarely leaving a home endeared to her by many ties.

In that amusing book, "On and off the Stage," by Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, it is related that when Lady Becher was quite an old woman she happened to be in London, and went to the Garrick Club to see her own portrait, which now adorns the staircase. She stood before it for some time, and then burst into tears. Probably, her bygone triumphs were unrolled before her—again she heard the shouts of applause,—again she saw the

closely packed houses—the fainting men and women—the rows upon rows of intent faces—held spell-bound by the magic of her genius. It was as a dream when one awaketh. But she had her compensations—she had the love of her husband and children, she had the esteem and affection of hosts of friends, and, after all, fame to a woman is but as a "royal mourning in purple" for happiness, and can never satisfy the heart. Lady Becher died in 1872 at the great age of eighty-one.

X.

Mrs. S. C. Hall.

1800-1881.

IT is a popular idea that a marriage between two literary people is almost sure to turn out a disastrous failure. The proverb, "two of a trade never agree," is constantly quoted, and instances are brought forward about certain literary wives, who neglect their husband's shirt buttons, and leave his dinners to be looked after by an incompetent cook. When he is exhausted by the burden and heat of the day, he comes in to find his wife, "her eye in a fine frenzy rolling," far too much absorbed to attend to his comforts. A cat and dog life is generally the result. So much has been said on this subject, that many literary men avoid authoresses, and look out for a bride who has "no ink on her thumb when they kiss her hand."

Any writing, except the entry of items in a tradesman's book, is considered undesirable; yet facts —stubborn facts—prove that marriages between literary people do occasionally turn out extremely well. What could be more ideally happy than the

marriage of Elizabeth and Robert Browning, both poets, and both devoted to their art? Then we have Mr. and Mrs. Cowden Clarke, the popular writers on Shakespeare, who lived and worked harmoniously together; and William and Mary Howitt; but the most remarkable instance of a united literary life is that of the Irish writers, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall. Not a cloud ever seems to have marred their complete harmony. They celebrated their golden wedding day amidst the congratulations of crowds of friends, and their many books, written in collaboration, prove how well they worked together.

Writing of his wife, Mr. S. C. Hall says in his "Retrospect of a Long Life," "We were so thoroughly one in all our pursuits, occupations, pleasures and labours, never having been separated for more than a month at a time, visiting places either for enjoyment or business, to write about them, producing our books, not in the same room, but always under the same roof, communicating one with the other, as to what should, or should not be done, our friends the same, our habits the same: that it is no wonder I find it difficult to separate her from me, or me from her."

Such was the testimony of her husband, himself a distinguished writer, editor and founder of the "Art Journal," and at one time editor of the "New Monthly Magazine."

During the 81 years of her busy and useful life, Mrs. Hall wrote no less than 250 books, counting those she edited and her numerous temperance tracts. Lady Morgan once said, "Why should I not be vain? Have I not written forty books?" But her forty sink into insignificance compared to Mrs. S. C. Hall's record. Writing to her husband, Carlyle, the sage of Chelsea, said, "her little pieces seem to me particularly excellent, and have a kind of gem-like brightness."

Such praise from such a critic was something to be proud of.

Anna Maria Fielding was born on the 6th January, 1800, in Anne Street, Dublin. When but a few weeks old, her mother brought her down to Graige, in the County Wexford, a place which belonged to her mother's stepfather, George Carr, Esq., and here she remained until her fifteenth year. Many descendants of a brother of George Carr may still be found in the neighbourhood of New Ross. Mrs. Fielding is described by her son-in-law, as "one of the best women God ever made," and he ought to know, for she lived under his roof for more than thirty years. She was very proud of her French descent, her grandfather having been one of the refugees from France, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He established a silk manufactory at Spitalfields, and was killed in the Lord George Gordon riots. Mrs. Fielding used to

describe her feelings of horror when his body was brought home.

Little Anna Maria seems to have had a free and happy childhood. Though she was petted, she was not spoilt, she loved all beautiful things, and made pets of all living creatures from a spider to a dog. Graige is by the seaside near Bannow, Co. Wexford, opposite to

> "Bag and Bun,
> Where Ireland was lost and won;"

in other words, where the Norman barons landed in 1169. Bannow, a peninsula that runs out into the sea, was the scene of nearly all Mrs. Hall's early sketches. She loved the district intensely, and, to the last, was an ardent worshipper of the sea. In a story called "Grandmamma's Pockets," she is assuredly giving a page of autobiography when she says:

"She was a light-hearted, merry, little maid, as ever lived, and had learned the happy art of manufacturing her own pleasures, and doing much to contribute to the pleasures of the few around her.

"In summer she walked, and ran, and bathed, and gathered shells and samphire, and sang with the birds, and galloped old Sorrel, and on Sundays always went in the old carriage, driven by the old coachman, drawn by the old horses, and escorted by the old footman, to the very old church."

There is another charming glimpse of her childhood in the introduction to the "Sketches of Irish Character"—

"In the early morning, returning from my sea bath up the long walk, lingering amid the old trees, or reading beside the stream in the demesne, which encircled an ornamental cottage that was covered with ivy, and formed a very city of refuge for small birds, from the golden-crested wren to the over-bearing starling. That cottage, with its gable, its low dark windows, its mossy seats and grassy banks, and pure limpid stream creeping over the smooth pebbles after escaping from a cascade, which for years was my ideal of a waterfall; that cottage was my paradise! I could hear the ocean rolling in the distance; the refreshing sea breeze, passing over fields of clover and banks of roses, was freighted with perfume. The parent birds would fearlessly pick up crumbs at my feet."

She was fond of taking off her shoes and stockings and dabbling in the fairy pools which the receding waves left in the hollow clefts of the rocks, and fonder still of chasing the waves as they rolled along the sloping beach.

This free and happy country life came to an end when she was in her fifteenth year. The little party of three, her mother, herself, and Mr. Carr, who looked upon her as his adopted daughter and prospective heiress, left their Wexford home and

settled in London. The heiress-ship came to nothing, for Mr. Carr died without a will, and his nephew came in for the property, which he soon squandered away.

It was in 1823 that Mr. S. C. Hall, then Parliamentary reporter in the House of Lords, made the acquaintance of the Fieldings. He was Irish by birth, for his father, Colonel Hall, had been stationed at Geneva Barracks, six miles from Waterford, when his third son, Samuel Carter, was born, just six months after the birth of Anna Maria Fielding.

Colonel Hall embarked in mining speculations, and opened thirteen copper mines in Ireland, the largest being on Ross Island, Killarney. Ore to the value of £100,000 was taken out of this mine. After giving employment to hundreds of men, women and children, the mine was flooded by the waters of the lake, complete ruin followed, and Mrs. Hall was left with twelve children to battle with the world. Her son, Samuel Carter, was most industrious and capable. His wooing of Miss Fielding was not long in the doing ; the year after they met, the marriage took place.

" Beautiful, accomplished and good," says Mr. Hall, " was the wife that on the 20th September, 1825, God gave me to be my life's chiefest blessing and most perfect boon."

From a portrait by Maclise we get a good idea of what Mrs. Hall was as a young woman. Long

ringlets hang about a round, broad face of a very pronounced Irish type, with large dark eyes and a short nose. The brightness of her eyes was celebrated in a couplet—

> Mrs. Hall, so fair and fine,
> Makes her brilliant eyes to shine.

The expression of her face is charming, full of fun, humour, and sweetness. Three days after the marriage, came an unexpected windfall in the shape of a cheque for £40, which was sent to Mr. Hall in payment of a book on Brazil, which he had compiled for a series called "The Modern Traveller." This pleasant surprise not only paid for the church fees, but also for the honeymoon trip, which was spent at Petersham, near Richmond. In 1825, the year after her marriage, Mrs Hall had written nothing, and did not even know that she could write. How she first began is related by her husband. She was telling him some anecdotes of her old Irish schoolmaster, and he said, "I wish you would write about that just as you tell it." She did so, and Mr. Hall printed the story, "Master Ben," in a monthly periodical he was then editing, "The Spirit and Manners of the Age." From this time all was plain sailing. Mrs. Hall never had any harrowing tales to tell of the cruelty of publishers, or of the mortification of rejected manuscripts. Other tales followed in quick succession, and these

were afterwards collected into the first volume of "Sketches of Irish Character."

There was now a brisk demand for her Irish tales, both in England and America, they were so fresh, so natural, so human. Her husband's influence as an editor, no doubt, helped to push her on. He was associated with Theodore Hook, from 1837, as sub-editor of "The New Monthly Magazine," before he became sole editor. This brought him and his wife into the society of many of the contributors—the Hon. Mrs. Norton, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton and others.

Mrs. Hall's mode of working may be best illustrated by the following words of her own: "I remember having a conversation with my friend, Maria Edgeworth. She did not see so clearly as I saw the value of imagination in literature for the young, and was almost angry when she discovered that a sketch I had written of a scene at Killarney was pure invention. She told me, indeed, that she had been so much deceived by one of my pictures as to have actually inquired for, and tried to find out, the hero of it, and argued strongly for truth in fiction. I ventured to ask her if her portrait of Sir Condy, in Castle Rackrent, was a veritable likeness, and endeavoured to convince her that to call imagination to the aid of reason, to mingle the ideal with the real, was not only

permissible but laudable, as a means of impressing truth."

Mrs. Hall was a very rapid writer. One of her Irish sketches, "We'll See About It," was written between the morning and evening of a summer day. Mr. S. C. Hall tells one story which almost seems incredible. He and his wife were travelling from Liverpool to London, and to beguile the journey he had bought a number of magazines and papers. Mrs. Hall began to read one of them with great attention, then put it into her husband's hand saying, "Read that, it's a capital Irish story." He glanced at it and said, "Well, that's modest, for it's your own!" She had read it through without the slightest idea that she had written it. Mr. Hall accounts for this extraordinary forgetfulness by adding that whatever she wrote, she rarely read after it was written, leaving it entirely to him to prepare it for press, revise the proofs, etc., and never questioned his judgment as to any erasures or omissions he might consider necessary to make.

An Irish cook who lived with the Halls in London was remarkably silent, seldom saying more than "yes" or "no." At length, she gave warning, and obstinately refused to say what was the cause of her leaving. She had no fault to find with the place, but she wished to go. On being pressed for the reason, she suddenly turned round and

said: "Arrah, ma'am, can't you lave me alone? Sure, ye know ye're goin' to put me into a book!" Of the sketches contributed to the "New Monthly Magazine" the principal one is "The Groves of Blarney," which was dramatised to supply a character for the Irish actor, Tyrone Power. It was produced at the Adelphi in 1838, and ran for a whole season. Another play was "The Irish Refugee," which was brought out at the St. James's Theatre, and had a run of ninety nights. Of Mrs. Hall's nine novels, "The Buccaneer," a story of the protectorate of Cromwell, was the first, but "Marian, or a Young Maid's Fortunes," is decidedly the best, the warm hearted Irish nurse, Katty Macan, being specially life-like and original. There are many dramatic scenes in "The Whiteboy," a book well worthy of the attention of all who study the Ireland of sixty years age. On the whole, however, Mrs. Hall is seen at her best in her short tales, for she had not much power of designing and working out a good plot.

She and her husband may be said to have originated the fashion of chatty illustrated accounts of interesting places. Everyone is familiar with their delightful book, "Ireland—its Scenery and Character," but, besides this, they wrote another on "Baronial Halls," and another, still more attractive, "Pilgrimages to English Shrines." This was followed by "The Book of the Thames," which first

came out in the "Art Journal," of which Mr. S. C. Hall was the founder and first editor. His salary was £600 a year, and he afterwards had a pension of £150 from the Civil List. Mrs. Hall also enjoyed a pension of £300 a year from the same source. Some idea of her activity as a philanthropist may be formed when we hear of all the charities she promoted, the Hospital for Consumption at Brompton, the Governesses' Institute, the Home for decayed Gentlewomen, and the Nightingale Fund. At a bazaar for the Chelsea Hospital she had a stall which added £450 to the Hospital funds. A raffle was got up for a handsome *papier mache* chair, which had been presented to Mrs. Hall by the manufacturers. She put in for it, and a few minutes afterwards, loud cheers were heard and a procession was formed headed by Charles and Henry Kingsley, who advanced and presented her with the chair. She kept it for many years, and then gave it to the Hospital, where it now is.

Both the Halls were enthusiastic on the subject of temperance. One of Mrs. Hall's temperance tracts bears the curious title, "Digging his Grave with a Wine Glass." In her girlish days she had, no doubt, seen something of the two and three bottle-men, who were so common in the country at the beginning of the century.

Years of useful work glided peacefully by. On

Mrs. Hall's eighty-first birthday her husband wrote the following letter to her, a most touching tribute to her influence both as a woman and as writer. It seems almost too sacred to print, but after her death it was thought well to give it to the public to show what she was :—

"This is the 6th January, 1881. Surely, surely, I may thank God for the blessing he gave to me, and to hundreds of thousands, eighty-one years ago. . . . Gratitude from me to Him has been increasing year by year, and day by day, since the ever memorable day I saw you first. You have been to me a guide, a counsellor, a companion, a friend, a wife, from that day to this, ever true, faithful, fond, devoted, my helper in many ways, my encourager and stimulator in all that was right, the same consoler in storm and sunshine, lessening every trouble, augmenting every pleasure. Wisely upright yourself, you have been mainly instrumental in making me wisely upright. . . . God bless you, my soul's darling, the love of my youth, the love of my age, more beautiful in my sight than you were fifty-six years ago. Such adoration as I may rightly tender to a fellow mortal who will be immortal, I render to you, praying God to bless us both, blessing me in blessing you, and blessing you in blessing me."

Twenty-four days after this touching letter was written, Mrs. Hall died on Sunday, 30th January,

at Devon Lodge, East Moulsey. Her husband was leaning over her pillow when she breathed her last word—only audible to him—"darling," and so she passed away. They are buried together at Addlestone churchyard.

There have been many more powerful writers than Mrs. S. C. Hall, more eloquent, more witty, more learned, but none that breathed such a gentle, loving spirit of sympathy. Everything Irish was specially dear to her, in fact she did not write so well about anything else. Her thoughts were continually going back to the glades, the glens, the seashore of her beloved Wexford. When her foot was on her native heath—then, and then only, was she really at home Her heart was with her own people, with Burnt Aigle, with Jack the Shrimp, with the samphire gatherers, with the fisher-folk, listening to their racy talk, and sharing in their joys and sorrows.

Mrs. Hall has something in common with her successor, Miss Jane Barlow, as a delineator of Irish peasant life. As a poet, as a literary artist, Miss Barlow is immeasurably superior, but as a teacher of moral truths in fiction, Mrs. Hall takes a higher place. She knew how to "point a moral," as well as to "adorn a tale."

XI.

Helen, Lady Dufferin

(Countess of Gifford).

1807-1867.

NO matter what collection of Irish ballads we take up, whether the pretty little green-bound volume at a shilling, or the coarse broad-sheet at a penny, we are sure to find one or other of Lady Dufferin's songs. *The Irish Emigrant* is the great favourite both in Ireland and in America, but the humour and fun of *Katey's Letter* is irresistible, and *The Bay of Dublin*, *Sweet Kilkenny Town*, and *Terence's Farewell to Kathleen* are always popular whenever they are heard. They possess in a singular degree the quality of tunefulness, they are what Carlyle calls "musical thoughts," —something that cannot be spoken, that must be sung. They sing themselves, as all true songs should do. And so while many bulky volumes of verse, which have cost their authors years of toil, have gone down into the land of forgetfulness, these

ballads, by virtue of their simplicity and truth, have lived and will continue to live for generations yet unborn. For "song passeth not away." Such ballads go straight to the heart, not only of the Irish people, but of humanity at large. There are no high-flown metaphors, they tell of homely joys and sorrows, "simple annals of the poor." Take, for example, the first verses of *The Lament of the Irish Emigrant*—

I'm sittin' on the stile, Mary,
Where we sat, side by side,
On a bright May mornin' long ago,
When first you were my bride.
The corn was springing, fresh and green,
The lark sang loud and high,
The red was on your lip, Mary,
And the love-light in your eye.

. . . . . .

But I miss the soft clasp of your hand,
Your breath warm on my cheek,
And I still keep listening for the words
You never more may speak.

In *Katey's Letter* all is joyousness and fun—fun that seems bubbling over from a full heart.

Och, girls, dear, did you ever hear,
I wrote my love a letther,
And altho' he cannot read,
Sure, I thought it all the betther,
For why should he be puzzled
With hard spellin' in the matther,
When the manin' was so plain
That I love him faithfully,
And he knows it, oh, he knows it,
Without one word from me!

Katey has a great deal to tell about her letter, she tells how she wrote it, and she folded it, and put a seal upon it.

"'Twas a seal, almost as big as the crown of my best bonnet," and then comes the conclusion :—

Now, girls, would you belave it?
That postman so concaited,
No answer will he bring me
So long as I have waited.
But maybe there mayn't be one
For the raison I have stated,
That my love can neither read nor write
Though he loves me faithfully!

In *Terence's Farewell to Kathleen* there is pathos as well as fun :—

So, my Kathleen, you're goin' to lave me
All alone by myself in this place,
But I'm sure that you'll never decaive me
Oh! no, if there's truth in that face.

Tho' England's a beautiful counthry,
Full of illegant boys, och, what then ?
You wouldn't forget your poor Terence,
You'll come back to ould Ireland agen !

. . . . . .

And when you come back to me, Kathleen,
None the betther shall I be off then,
You'll be spakin' such beautiful English
I won't know my Kathleen agen !

Eh ! now where's the need of this hurry ?
Don't fluster me now in this way,
I've forgot, 'twixt the grief and the flurry,
Ev'ry word I was manin' to say.

Now just wait a minute, I bid ye,
Can I talk if you bother me so ?
Och, Kathleen, my blessin' go wid ye,
Every inch of the way that ye go !

There is not the least effort in Lady Dufferin's ballads. She seems to have thoroughly enjoyed writing them—she sang as the birds sing, because they must. Some of her society verses, though in quite a different style, are very amusing. *The Charming Woman* is perhaps the best, and, moreover, contains a piece of good advice at the end :

Don't marry a charming woman
If you are a sensible man !

On her father's side Lady Dufferin came of a genuinely Irish stock. The O'Sheridans were an ancient and important Celtic sept, who possessed castles and lands in the County Cavan, so that a large tract of country was marked on the map as "the Sheridan country."

With varying fortunes the family went on till we come to Dr. Thomas Sheridan, the friend of Swift, and by profession a schoolmaster. He used to spend months with Swift in Dublin, and Swift constantly went to Quilca, a country house which belonged to Dr. Sheridan. Esther Johnson (Stella) sometimes brightened the evenings with her presence, and witty talk flowed abundantly, for Sheridan as well as Swift excelled in conversation. Not a day passed that he did not make a rebus, an anagram, or a madrigal. Lord Cork says he was "idle, poor, and gay, and completely ignorant of the value of money." Of the doctor's illustrious grandson, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, there is no need to speak, for his fame is world-wide. Moore has well described him in the following lines :—

The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall—
The orator, dramatist, minstrel, who ran
Through each mood of the lyre, and was master of all.

As a dramatist, Sheridan takes the highest place, and two of his comedies, *The Rivals*, and *The School for Scandal*, hold the stage at the present day.

His romantic marriage with the beautiful Miss Linley, of Bath, has been made recently the subject of a novel by the well-known Irish novelist, Mr. F. Frankfort Moore, and is called *A Nest of Linnets*. Tom Sheridan, Lady Dufferin's father, was one of those very clever people who seem as though they ought to make a figure in the world, and end by doing nothing in it. He was always ready with a repartee. One day, when his father, who never had any ready money, threatened to cut him off with a shilling, he said, "You don't happen to have that shilling about you now, do you, sir?" He married Caroline Henrietta Callander, daughter of Colonel Callander, of Craigforth and Ardkinglas, who was the authoress of several novels, one of them being *Carwell*, in which the hero is hanged. This gave rise to a *bon mot* of Sydney Smith's, who said, "he knew Mrs. Sheridan was a Callander, but he was not aware she was a Newgate Calendar!" She accompanied her husband to the Cape, where he died, and she, with her elder daughter, Helen, afterwards Lady Dufferin, returned to England. Rooms were granted to the widow, who was left badly off, with seven children on her hands, at Hampton Court Palace. The three daughters were all tall and stately, and all dowered with remarkable beauty. They were often called "the three graces," and "the fairest of the fair."

Lord Lamington says in his book, "In the Days of the Dandies," that no one who ever met Lady Dufferin could ever forget her rare combination of grace, beauty, and wit. Caroline, the second sister, afterwards the Hon. Mrs. Norton, was a brunette, with dark burning eyes, a clear olive complexion, and a pure Greek profile; the youngest, who afterwards became Duchess of Somerset, was unanimously elected Queen of Beauty at the Eglinton tournament. Her large deep blue eyes, black hair, and pink and white complexion, gave her quite a different type of beauty from either of her sisters. Lady Dufferin used to say as a girl, "Carrie is the wit, and Georgie is the beauty, and I ought to be the good one, but I am not!" Both she and her sister Caroline early showed a taste for verse-writing. Before either of them were twenty-one, they received £100—£50 apiece—from Power the music publisher, for twelve songs, which they had written solely for their own amusement. Helen Sheridan was brought out at the early age of seventeen, and before she was half through the London season, Captain Blackwood, then an officer in the Royal Navy, met her at a ball, and fell in love with her. As he was a third son, without any expectations, the match was not considered at all a good one, but it came off, nevertheless, and the young couple were married at St. George's Church, on the 4th

July, 1825. They started for Italy the same day, and eleven months afterwards their only child, the late Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, whose loss is still deplored, was born at Florence. So great was the danger of Mrs. Blackwood, as she then was, that a consultation was held as to whether her life, or that of her child, should be saved. Overhearing it, she cried, "Never mind me, save my baby!"

Wonderful, indeed, was the love between mother and son. She was so young that she was taken for a girl, until she was heard consulting with a friend whether her baby's ribbons should be pink or cherry-coloured.

Lord Dufferin says that "it is not every son that can remember his mother's coming of age;" he did, and celebrated the event by nearly poisoning himself by eating laburnum berries. During the six years of Lady Dufferin's married life she spent a wandering existence, sometimes in Italy, sometimes at a cottage at Thames Ditton, and sometimes with her mother at Hampton Court. Her husband was generally at sea, and his visits had to be few and far between.

She paid several visits to Clandeboye, to her husband's great-uncle, James, Lord Dufferin, and her presence brought sunshine into the dull existence of a common-place North of Ireland family. Her musical talent would have made her an

acquisition anywhere, for she sang delightfully, and had such a good ear that if she went to the opera, she would be heard singing all the airs from it next morning.

Lady Dufferin was left a widow in 1841. At Rome during the Easter ceremonies at St. Peter's, in her widow's cap with a large crape veil over it, she created quite a sensation. Mrs. Somerville says that, "with her exquisite features and oval face, anything more lovely could not be conceived, and the Roman people crowded round her in undisguised admiration."

By the death of his brothers, her husband had succeeded to the title, and she now devoted herself, more than ever, to her only son. She always accompanied him in his visits to Clandeboye, and she joined him in his yacht during a cruise in the Mediterranean. He had just published his "Letters from High Latitudes," and she embodied her experience in a book that she called "Lispings from Low Latitudes, or extracts from the Journal of the Hon. Impulsia Gushington." This was published in 1860.

It was not surprising that such a very attractive woman as Lady Dufferin should have many offers of marriage, but, brilliant as many of them were, she resolutely kept to her determination of making a home for her son, who was rapidly coming to the front of public life. One of her admirers was the

Earl of Gifford, a man 14 years younger than she was, who had first made her acquaintance when he was with a tutor, studying for Cambridge. He was depressed and morbid, and Lady Dufferin, with her wonderfully sympathetic nature, understood and cheered him. And so an affection began which, on his part, knew no change, and lasted for twenty long years.

He asked her to marry him, but she refused, and she might have persisted in her refusal if it had not been for an unfortunate accident. In the effort of preventing the bole of a tree from crushing some workmen who were removing it, Lord Gifford sustained such serious injuries that he never recovered. Lord Dufferin had now married, and when the party returned from Ireland, they found Lord Gifford hopelessly ill. He was removed to their house at Highgate, and now, at last, Lady Dufferin consented to marry her faithful lover at his earnest request. The marriage ceremony was solemnised in Lord Gifford's bedroom, on the 13th Oct., 1862, and two months afterwards he passed away in his 41st year, holding, as Lord Dufferin says, "the hand of her, to whom he had clung for sympathy, support, and comfort from boyhood."

Writing of this marriage, Lady Dufferin said, "It gives me the right to devote every day and hour that God spares him to his comfort and relief, and the right to mourn him openly, whose loss I

shall never cease to deplore as the dearest and most faithful of friends."

We hear sometimes of the romance of real life, and surely if ever there was a romance this was one—an affection, sanctified by suffering, which had borne the test of time, and which at last found its reward. Lady Dufferin—or to give her her new title, Lady Gifford—did not long survive. Four years afterwards she was attacked by cancer, and though there was a temporary rally, she knew that her days were numbered. In a journal that she kept for her son she says :—

"The last day at Clandeboye was full of sweet and bitter thoughts to me. I walked round the lake, and took leave of all the old (and new) places. I sat upon the fallen tree and looked long at the tower, the monument of your love."

Her last days were spent at Highgate. She took great pride and delight in seeing her son's letters in the *Times* on the Irish land question. When they were published as a book, he says, she was "too weak to do more than read the title and fondle the book a little, as though she were stroking the head of a child." Beloved and loving to the end, she passed away on the 13th of June, 1867, in the sixtieth year of her age.

"Thus went out of the world," says Lord Dufferin, "one of the sweetest, most beautiful, most accomplished, wittiest, most loving, and

lovable human beings that ever walked upon the earth. There was no quality wanting to her perfection, and this I say, not with the partiality of a son, but as one well acquainted with the world, and with both men and women. I doubt whether there have been any who combined, with so high a spirit, such strong unerring good sense, tact, and discretion."

She was the most womanly of women. No thought of fame, no wish for it, ever seems to have crossed her mind. And yet to those who do not ask, the wished-for boon sometimes comes.

In the backwoods of America, in the swamps of distant lands beyond the seas, the ballads of the *Irish Emigrant*, and of *Terence's Farewell to Kathleen*, may often be heard. And surely this is fame.

XII.

Catherine Hayes.

The Swan of Erin.

1825-1861.

SOME scenes in the lives of some people stand out, with all the clearness and distinctness of a picture, before the mind's eye. It is impossible to forget them, they stamp themselves on the memory. Such a scene belongs to the life-story of the gifted Irishwoman, of whom a slight account will be now given.

A summer evening on the shores of the Shannon, "the silver Shannon spreading like a sea," gardens sloping down to the river's brink, mists of twilight slowly spreading over the tops of the hills, clothing them with mystery. From the City of Limerick —Limerick the Beautiful—boats flit up and down, It was a time for whispering lovers, for music, for romance. The silence was broken by the sound of a voice—a voice clear and silvery, sweet and strong; it seemed to be coming from a woodbine-covered arbour in the grounds of the Earl of

Limerick, which bordered the river. Who was singing? Was it the spirit of the Shannon, was it some Lorelei calling to her sisters, or was it another Undine hungering for the love of a mortal, so that she might gain a soul? Higher and higher the voice soared, now a simple ballad, now a lullaby that might have been sung,

"When Malachi wore the collar of gold,
That he won from the proud invader."

And hark, now is heard the well-known song of *The Lass of Gowrie*. One by one, the boats stopped under the shadow of the trees, everyone was listening, spellbound, not a whisper was heard. When the concluding words came,

"And now she's Lady Gowrie!"

a shake on the high notes, brilliant and ringing, rose on the evening air, like the thrill of an imprisoned nightingale. The audience could no longer remain silent, a burst of applause followed. Amongst the listeners on this momentous evening was the Hon. and Rev. Edmond Knox, Bishop of Limerick. He inquired who this wonderful singer was, and he found out that she was no fairy minstrel, but simply little Catherine Hayes, then barely ten years old. She had to sing. The birds had taught her, the murmur of the river had spoken to her, and her own soul, that stirred within her mightily.

The child's voice that came from that woodbine-covered arbour was destined in after years to stir hundreds of thousands, not only in her native Ireland, but in Italy, America, Australia, even in the remote Sandwich Islands. It was the first scene in the life drama of Catherine Hayes's eventful life—not a long life was hers—it was as the life of roses that bloom only for a day. Thirty-six years, and it was ended, but what years were they, years of inspiring work, crowned by success, giving joy to thousands and sorrow to none!

Catherine Hayes was born at No. 4 Patrick Street, Limerick, on the 29th October, 1825. Her parents belonged to a very humble rank in life; we hear nothing of her father, only of her mother and a sister, Henrietta. Little Kitty was a delicate, reserved child, and rather shrank from the rough games of the other children. Her great delight was to steal away to an old relative, who was in the service of the Earl of Limerick. Lord Limerick's town mansion was then in Henry Street, near the Bishop's Palace or See House, as it was sometimes called. The gardens attached to those houses stretched in parallel lines down to the river's edge, and were remarkable for their beauty. The woodbine-covered arbour was Catherine Hayes's favourite retreat. A lady in the town, who understood music, took a fancy to her, and used to teach her ballads. One day she played a shake on the piano, and

asked little Kitty if she could imitate it. The child went to the arbour, and in a few days came back, and at the end of the ballad, broke into a shake so perfect, so finished, that her teacher gave a scream of delight and surprise. The kind-hearted Bishop did not forget the impression the child's singing had made on him. He sent down to invite her to come and sing at the Palace, where she took part in various musical reunions, which were under the direction of the Brothers Rogers, one of whom became organist of Limerick Cathedral. The Bishop did more than this; he and his daughter-in-law got up a subscription to defray the expenses of Catherine Hayes's musical education. Money flowed in rapidly, and it was arranged that she should be sent to Dublin, and put under the tuition of Signor Sapio and his wife, who lived in Percy Place.

The Bishop wrote to him as follows :—

"Miss Hayes will be prepared to leave this in a week or ten days. . . . She is a most modest, gentle, unassuming girl, and so anxious is she for improvement—knowing, indeed, that her livelihood depends upon it—that I am convinced she will give her very soul to it."

It was on the 1st April, 1839, at the age of 14, that Catherine Hayes took up her residence with Signor Sapio, and a month afterwards she sang at a concert with him in a duet, *O'er Shepherd*

Pipe, and was loudly *encored*. Her voice was a soprano of considerable compass, even at that early age, and when she appeared at a concert, after six months teaching from Signor Sapio, the *Evening Packet* pronounced that she was a highly promising vocalist.

When she returned to Limerick on a visit, the Bishop gave a concert in her honour. Two years afterwards she was introduced to the Abbe Liszt, after a concert, and he wrote to Mrs. Edmond Knox as follows :—

"I do not know of any voice more expressive than that of Miss Hayes. As to her singing, it is easy, natural, and devoid of all false method. Whether in London, Paris, Italy, or wherever I may be I shall always be happy to forward her in her profession."

To give one proof of her advance as a singer, she raised her terms for singing at concerts in Dublin from five to ten guineas. She visited Belfast, singing at the opening of the Anacreontic Hall, and after brief visits to Parsonstown and her native Limerick, a great event in her life took place. She was introduced to the great Lablache, whose opinion on all musical matters was considered final. Terrified and trembling, the young singer was prevailed on to give *Qui la voce*, always considered a formidable test. He asked her to try a still more difficult solo, then a duet, then another

duet. After this trial he communicated his opinion to Signor Sapio, which was that "Miss Hayes possesses all the qualities to make a good singer. . . . . I am certain she will end by becoming a perfect vocalist in every sense of the word."

During this interview with Lablache in Dublin, he urged her to go and see Grisi and Mario in *Norma* the following evening. She had never witnessed great acting before, and when the Druid priestess, personated by the Queen of Italian song, received an ovation at the close of the performance, and was covered with wreaths and bouquets, her spirit was stirred within her. Tame indeed did the applause of the concert-room appear to such a triumph as this. She at once resolved that she, too, would be an opera singer. After a private concert given for her by the Countess of St. Germains, she went to see her friends at Limerick. They all dissuaded her from going on the stage, but she held firm to her determination and made up her mind to go to Paris and study under Emmanuel Garcia, who educated Malibran for the operatic stage. So feverishly anxious was she to waste no time, that she would not even wait for a family who were going to Paris in two months, but started alone—rather a formidable undertaking for a timid girl of 17, sixty years ago.

On the 12th October, 1842, she arrived at Paris with a letter of introduction to George Osborne, a celebrated pianist. His wife, an amiable and accomplished woman, promised to look after her. She found Garcia "the dearest, kindest, most gracious of masters." After a year and a half under him, he declared that "he could not add a single charm or grace to her voice, so pure in tone and so extensive in compass." She ascended with ease to D in alt; her upper notes were limpid and like a well-tuned silver bell up to A, while her lower notes were the most beautiful ever heard in a real soprano; and her shake—her wonderful shake—was remarkably good. She was tall, with a fine figure, and very graceful in her movements.

Garcia strongly advised her to go to Italy, and, not dismayed by the long distance, she went to Milan, and put herself under Signor Ronconi. At one of the musical parties she sang at she made such an impression on Madame Grassani, aunt to Madame Grisi, that she wrote off to the manager of the Italian Opera at Marseilles telling him of the new star, and advising him to offer her an engagement. He forthwith came to Milan, heard the young singer, and offered her terms that seemed to her like a fortune. On the 10th May, 1845, she made her first appearance at Marseilles as Elvira in *I Puritani*. She was absolutely faint from terror, and not a hand was raised to en-

courage her ; not the feeblest cheer was heard, not until the eighth scene, when Elvira appears in her wedding robes. The beautiful opening polacca, *Son virgin*, seemed to inspire her. In spite of her trembling lips, she sang it with such sweetness, such tenderness, and such expression, that shouts of applause, deafening and unmistakable, burst forth, and flowers filled the stage, making a perfect garden about her. She *felt* that she had succeeded. Her popularity grew so much that when the three months' engagement came to an end, the manager urged her to accept his offer of appearing at Paris. But she knew that art is long, and that she had still much to learn, so she decided to go back to Milan, and continue her studies under Signor Ronconi. At a concert given by Regondi, she met the manager of La Scala, and he offered her an engagement which she gratefully accepted. La Scala was then looked upon as the first theatre in Europe, and to be heard there was a proud distinction for any singer. When Catherine Hayes appeared as the Linda di Chamouni of Donizetti, she was called before the curtain no less than twelve times, and her appearance the following night as Desdemona won for her the name of the "Pearl of the Theatre." At Verona her success was quite as dazzling, and at Venice "The Hayes," as she was called, created quite a furore, there were hurricanes of "bravas," which lasted for ten

minutes, and numerous calls before the curtain. Later on, in 1846, she had a successful visit at Vienna. While she was at Florence, Catalani's villa was open to her, and the ex-queen of Italian song kissed her affectionately, and said, "What would I not give to be in London when you are making your début! Your fortune is certain."

An offer of a London engagement soon followed. She was engaged for the season at a salary of £1,300, and made her first appearance at Covent Garden on the 10th April, 1849. Native singers who had won a reputation on the continent, such as she had done, were indeed scarce, and she received such an uproarious welcome, that she was quite overcome. The opera chosen was Linda di Chamouni, and it was not till the end of the well-known air, *O Luce di Quest Anima*, that she recovered herself and introduced her celebrated shake, winning great applause and an encore. The mad scene was, according to the *Times*, sung with admirable effect, especially the bravura passage, "Non e Ver," in which her execution of the chromatic passages was perfect, and the ascending scale with the violin was accomplished with remarkable decision and brilliancy. At the end of the performance, after the curtain fell, she was seen kneeling in a private box before her first patron, the Bishop of Limerick, sobbing out her gratitude to him for all he had done for her. No doubt, in that moment of triumph

the scene by the river, the singing in the woodbine-covered arbour, came back to her with renewed force.

She was commanded by Queen Victoria to sing at a private concert at Buckingham Palace, and during the evening the Queen talked to her for some time, and congratulated her on her deserved success, and so did Prince Albert, whose opinion on musical matters was always worth having. She re-visited Dublin, after seven years' absence, in the autumn of 1849, to fulfil an engagement at the Philharmonic Concerts, and her singing created an immense sensation, only equalled by that of the Lind epidemic. She also appeared at the Theatre Royal, when an extraordinary scene took place—a scene calculated to shake the nerves of any singer, much less a timid girl of four and twenty. The opera was *Lucia di Lammermoor,* and the hero provided was a Signor Paglieri, who was quite incompetent for the part. Again and again he broke down, and at last Catherine Hayes made him a curtsey, and left the stage. Now followed shouts and "cat-calls" from the gallery and a regular row seemed to be at hand. It so happened that Sims Reeves, then in the zenith of his fame, was present with some friends in a private box. He was recognised and shouts of "Reeves, Reeves!" rang through the house. The manager, Mr. Calcraft, then came forward and said that he

had no control over Mr. Reeves, whose engagement had terminated. Sims Reeves then stood up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I will sing to oblige you, but not to oblige Mr. Calcraft."

Mr. Calcraft, not to be out-done, said—

"I am not angry, I assure you, that Mr. Reeves has declined to sing to oblige me, but I am gratified to find that he has consented to do so to please the audience, and doubly gratified that, under the untoward circumstances, he will support your gifted and distinguished young countrywoman."

The curtain again rose, and the opera proceeded, Catherine Hayes showed no trace of the nervousness she must have felt, she threw herself into her part, and she and Sims Reeves were again and again called before the curtain, amidst waving of hats, canes, handkerchiefs, and umbrellas. The manager and Sims Reeves finally shook hands and a riot that threatened serious consequences ended in peace. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Tisdall for pointing out to me another account of this scene, given by Sims Reeves himself in his book, "My Jubilee, or Fifty Years of Artistic Life." Paglieri was not the only Edgardo who failed, for another tenor named Damcke, who happened to be at hand, was sent on for the part, and was found equally incompetent. Miss Hayes was therefore, subjected to two painfully embarrassing disappointments. Reeves, who was in a private

box, after considerable delay, kindly came to the rescue. He had good reason for being reluctant to comply with the request of the manager, Calcraft, that he would sing. He had dined late, and whenever he had to appear either on the stage or on the concert platform, he invariably had dinner served for him at an early hour. Besides, he was incensed at what Willert Beale (who was concerned with Calcraft in that engagement) had said to him in the box, that his conduct was *ungentlemanly* in refusing to help Miss Hayes out of the difficulty. Beale was undoubtedly culpable in using that irritating expression, and it was surprising that Reeves sang with such effect under the circumstances. Little did those who witnessed the scene of disorder and delay expect to hear the voice of such an Edgardo, blending with that of such a Lucia. His opinion of her acting and singing of the parts is expressed in the before-named book, in the words—"She was the *beau ideal* of Lucia. With her I really felt myself 'Edgar of Ravenswood,' and she 'Lucy Ashton'—I have sang with many Lucias in my time, but Catherine Hayes was the sweetest of them all."

Cork and Limerick were visited, and on the occasion of the benefit night at Limerick, intense excitement prevailed. An eye-witness says of Catherine Hayes's departure—"The hotel was surrounded from an early hour, and it was with

difficulty that Miss Hayes was able to proceed to the carriage in waiting to convey her to the railway terminus. Hundreds of the poor, to whom she gave liberal charity, blessed her as she departed, and amid the farewell salutations of large bodies of ladies and gentlemen, the latter uncovered in her honour, she at length drove away, affected to tears by the favours enthusiastically heaped upon her."

An engagement the following year at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, by Lumley, was not entirely satisfactory. Catherine Hayes appeared but seldom, and other singers took her place. Dr. Tisdall has kindly thrown a light on this matter, which has hitherto been unexplained. He says:—"I well recollect the cause of Miss Hayes's objection to appear, and was present at a performance of the opera in which she refused to sing. It was *La Tempesta*, composed by Halévy, and its plot was founded on Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. Sontag was the 'Miranda,' a tenor named Calzolari 'Ferdinand,' and Lablache, 'Caliban.' Miss Hayes had carefully rehearsed the music assigned to 'Ariel' in the music room of the theatre, and then rehearsals on the stage began. She, to her great disappointment, heard from Lumley, the manager, that some of the music of her part was to be sung while she was suspended from a wire, to be worked from above the stage.

She properly refused to sing in such a position, telling Lumley that she was not a member of his *corps de ballet.* He was indignant at her refusal, and, as the opera was to be produced at an early date, it became absolutely necessary to make some speedy change. Carlotta Grisi, the graceful and popular *danseuse*, appeared as the 'dainty Ariel.' The opera was performed for but a few nights. Miranda was the only part in which I heard Sontag. Lablache, notwithstanding his enormous *physique*, was a surprisingly nimble Caliban. The name of Miss Hayes regularly appeared in the bills in the list of singers engaged. Lumley paid her weekly salary, but positively refused to permit her to appear in any theatre or concert hall until the expiration of the term of her engagement."

After another visit to Italy, when she sang at Rome during the Carnival, Catherine Hayes appeared in London in the oratorios of Haydn, Handel and Mendelssohn, and sang at the Philharmonic Concerts at Liverpool. She now resolved on a gigantic tour—not as common then as such tours are now—and left for New York in September '51. Bad management threatened the tour with failure, but an electioneering agent, Mr. W. E. Evory Bushnell, came to the rescue, and volunteered to see her through triumphantly. By his advice she forfeited £3,000, and he undertook the management of the tour.

Dr. Tisdall has most kindly supplied a copy of the following letter, the original of which was given to him by Doctor Joy, who accompanied Catherine Hayes as her agent and secretary through the United States. It is unusually interesting, as it refers to her triumphs in New York and other centres :—

" Clarendon House, N.Y., November 2, 1851.

" My dear Mr. Beale,—At last I take up my pen to write, thanking you for your two kind letters, which, I need hardly say, gave me very great pleasure. Since my arrival in this mighty country, I have been kept very busy, one way or other—indeed, so much so, that I fear all my friends on the other side of the Atlantic will think I have forgotten them, which is not the case. Want of time alone has occasioned my silence. You have already heard, from Dr. Joy, the good news of my success. I can, without vanity, tell you that my *début* has been great—indeed, all you could have wished. We longed for you on the first night of my concert. ' It would have done your heart good,' as we say in old Ireland, to hear the outbursts of applause with which I was received. It was, indeed, overpowering. But, enough of this. You know, or at least can imagine, it all, so I shall not weary you with repetitions. I was delighted to learn, from your second letter, that dear Mrs. Beale has recovered from her recent attack. I trust you all

may enjoy the blessing of health. We have been visting Boston, Providence, Hartford, and Newhaven with most encouraging results. I have to say of Doctor Joy that he is unremitting in his attention to my every wish, and I believe that all our party have but one feeling towards him—of kindness and respect for his many excellent qualities. Give my best love to your dear mother, to Maria, and the little ones. I look forward to a happy meeting with you all in England. Mamma and Henrietta desire their warmest love to all.—Believe me, my dear Mr. Beale, yours very sincerely,

"CATHERINE HAYES.

"POSTSCRIPT.—Do you not observe an improvement in my writing C.? I have writen so many autographs that it has gained, by practice, an additional flourish. May all happiness be yours. Kindest regards to your dear father.

"To Willert Beale, Esquire."

Dr. Tisdall adds that, "With her eminent musical qualifications the writer of this letter was gifted with great histrionic ability. Her acting as Anna in *La Somnambula*, and Lucia, in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, left nothing to be desired, and I have been told, by competent judges, that her performance of the part of the Druid Priestess, *Norma*, was deserving of the highest praise. Fortunate,

indeed, was it for her and for lovers of operatic music that she disregarded the counsel of those Limerick friends who endeavoured to dissuade her from going on the stage."

Philadelphia, San Francisco and California were visited in turn: fabulous sums were given in California for seats, one ticket selling for 1,150 dollars. Then came South America, the Sandwich Isles, and Australia, visiting Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide. Miss Hayes went on to Batavia, and in the capital of Java she created an extraordinary sensation. After an absence of five years, she reached London in August, 1856, and two months afterwards she was married to Mr. Bushnell, at St. George's, Hanover Square. He soon fell into ill-health, and died the following year at Biarritz. His widow returned to London, and sang at Jullien's Promenade concerts and at Her Majesty's Theatre. Her ballad singing was the branch of her art in which she was unapproachable. Her singing of *The Last Rose of Summer* was something to be remembered by those who had the good fortune to hear it.

Professor Harvey, of Dublin, who is the composer of so many well-known and popular songs and pianoforte pieces, Irish fantasias, &c., sung and played by such celebrated artists as Marie Roze, Zélie de Lussan, and Arabella Goddard, gives the following graphic description of the

first song he ever composed, which was sung by Catherine Hayes, the Irish nightingale :—

"The composition occurred in this way. Catherine Hayes had returned to Ireland after a long tour in Australia, India, and America. I had composed a song suitable to the occasion, with the above title. I was but a young lad at the time, so taking the song with me, I waited on her one morning at Morrison's Hotel, and having obtained an interview, she asked me to play it over for her. She then sang it and so delighted was she with it, that she ran out of the room, bringing back several members of the company to hear it, who all were loud in their praises.

"It was then and there arranged she would sing it the following evening as a 'surprise song' at the short concert following the opera. Accordingly it was carried out in this way. She had sung *The Last Rose of Summer*, and, as usual, delighted all; cheers and encores of course, followed. Catherine Hayes remained very quiet until a lull took place, then, turning to the accompanist, who played the opening bars, she rushed to the footlights, and with outstretched arms, impassionately broke out into the opening strain, 'I breathe once more my native air,' ending with a brilliant cadenza and her marvellous shake on the final words, 'Home of my heart.' The effect was magical—description fails. I occupied an humble

and nervous seat in the pit, but there are many who still remember the scene."

In the prime of her powers Catherine Hayes died in the house of a friend, Henry Lee, at Roccles, Upper Sydenham, Kent, on the 11th August, 1861, and was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. The personality of her will, which was proved August 26th, was sworn under £16,000, a goodly sum to have been gained entirely by her own exertions. She lost $27,000 by the failure of Saunders and Breen, of San Francisco.

The name of Catherine Hayes should always be cherished in Ireland. As a woman, and as a singer, she reflected credit on her country, and well deserved the name that was given to her of "The Swan of Erin."

XIII.

Jane Francesca, Lady Wilde

("Speranza.")

1826-1896.

THERE is no doubt about Lady Wilde being a notable Irishwoman, yet, all the same, it is by no means an easy task to write even a slight sketch of her life. She was a complex and many-sided woman, holding a conspicuous place in Dublin, and afterwards in London society, as well as in the literature of her native country. Like all women of a strong and pronounced individuality, she was most attractive to some people, and equally unattractive to others.

Warm-hearted, enthusiastic, romantic, and generous, she always had an eye to theatrical effect, which was shown by her remarkable dress, by her habit of receiving her guests in partially lighted rooms, and by her style of writing, florid, grandiose, and epigrammatic; yet not without a certain charm of its own. There was nothing small or petty about Lady Wilde. Mentally and physically, she was on a large scale.

Beginning at a very early age as a poetess, with marked Nationalistic opinions, she was also a capital translator from German, French, Danish, and Italian, and an essayist of great merit. A varied life was hers, full of colour and movement; she influenced, or was influenced by, most of the leading men of her time, including the Young Ireland party, of which she was the life and soul.

Her husband, Sir William Wilde, was quite as clever as she was, though in a different way, and their house at Merrion Square was the rallying place for all who were eminent in science, art, or literature. Dr. Shaw, the versatile, sarcastic Fellow of Trinity College, and a brilliant writer for the Press, was frequently seen there on Saturday afternoons; the "Sham Squire," in other words, Mr. W. J. Fitzpatrick, the well-known biographer, seldom failed to show his melancholy, aristocratic face; Dr. Tisdall gave some of his delightful and mirth-inspiring recitations; Sir Robert Stewart brightened the dimly lit rooms with his cheery presence, and among this distinguished throng moved the tall figure of Speranza, a very queen of society, inspiring and inspired.

Writing in one of her essays about the faults of celebrated men of her time, Lady Wilde says with equal truth and eloquence:—

"Of what value to the world are the petty details of their weaknesses and failings? We want

to know simply what great thoughts a man has added to the world's treasures, what great impulses he gave to the world's progress. If none, let him rest in peace, we do not need the vulgar gossip of his faults. . . . Let us gather the eternal treasures, but leave the rest to the waters of oblivion."

It will be well to keep these noble words in remembrance, while we are taking a brief glance at the career of the woman who wrote them. Jane Francesca Elgee was the daughter of a clergyman of the Irish Church (afterwards arch-deacon). She was born at Wexford in 1826. The Elgees were originally an Italian race, descended from the Algiati of Florence. The first that came to Ireland was the great-grandfather of Speranza, and the name finally settled down into its present form. Lady Wilde's grandfather, Archdeacon Elgee, rector of Wexford, played a remarkable part in the days of the rebellion of '98, and on account of his popularity was left uninjured by the rebels of that time. Her mother, Sarah Kingsbury, was the daughter of Dr. Thomas Kingsbury, Commissioner in Bankruptcy, and owner of the well-known mansion, Lisle House, Dublin. Her uncle, Sir Charles Ormsby, Bart., was a member of the last Irish Parliament. Sir Robert M'Clure, the seeker of the North-west passage, was her first cousin, and she was also related to the Rev. Charles Maturin, author

of "Bertram." Her only brother, Judge Elgee, was one of the most distinguished members of the American Bar.

She was brought up in an atmosphere of the most intense conservatism, so much so that when the immense funeral procession of Thomas Davis, a leading Nationalist, passed her window in Leeson Street, she did not know who he was. She got hold of a book, *The Spirit of the Nation*, containing poems by D'Alton Williams, and her imagination took fire from it, and she became a poetess and a patriot. Under the name of Speranza she sent some poems to the *Nation*, which was founded and edited by Charles Gavan Duffy. This was about the year 1847, when *The Nation* had been started five years. There was a poet's corner in it, and Speranza, along with "Eva" (Miss Eva Mary Kelly), "Mary" (Miss Ellen Downing), and "Thomasine," were the principal contributors to it.

Speranza's poems attracted much attention at the time. They were full of ardour, trumpet-calls to action, not feminine wailings for the past. Many thought that this stately daughter of an Irish archdeacon, with her dark flashing eyes, must be a man, and Gavan Duffy, when he went to see her at Leeson Street, was surprised to find that she was a girl of twenty. Of these much lauded verses hardly one has survived. They used to crop up in street

ballads some years ago, but now they are like extinct volcanoes, their day is over, and there is no demand for them. Even the best of them, *A million a Decade*, and another, with the refrain, *Lov'd Ireland*, are difficult to find. A verse from *The Famine Year* is worth giving :—

Little children, tears are strange upon your infant faces,
God meant you but to smile within your mother's soft embraces,
Oh, we know not what is smiling, and we know not what is dying,
But we're hungry, very hungry, and we cannot stop our crying ;
And some of us grow cold and white, we know not what it means,
But as they lie beside us, we tremble in our dreams !

A deep tone of feeling is touched in the poem of *Related Souls*—

Without human aidance
I cross the river of Life and Fate,
Wake me no more with that voice whose cadence
Could lure me back from the Golden Gate,
For my spirit would answer your spirit's call,
Though life lay hid where the shadows fall ;
And the mystic joys of the world unseen
Would be less to me, than the days that have been.

Life may be fair in that new existence
Where saints are crowned and the saved rejoice,
But over the depth of the infinite distance
I'll lean and listen and hear your voice.
For never on earth, though the tempest rages,
And never in heaven, if God be just—
Never, through all the unnumbered ages,
Can souls be parted that love and trust !

Speranza's poems, though often forceful, are never musical ; she never wrote a real song, though sometimes she comes near it.

She could not write an ordinary letter like any ordinary person. Here is one, given by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy in his interesting book, " My Life in Two Hemispheres." The letter is addressed to him, and is dated from 34 Leeson Street :—

" My Dear Sir,—I return with many thanks the volume of Cromwell which has been travelling about with me for the last four months, and shall feel obliged for the two others when you are quite at leisure, though not even Carlyle can make this soulless iconoclast interesting. It is the only work of Carlyle I have met with, in which my heart does not go along with his words.

" I cannot forbear telling you, now the pen is in my hand, how deeply impressed I was with your lecture to your club, it was the sublimest teaching, and the style so simple from its very sublimity.

It seemed as if truth passed directly from your heart to ours without the aid of a medium, at least, I felt that everywhere the thoughts struck you, nowhere the words, and this, in my opinion, is the perfection of composition, it is soul speaking to soul. . . . . Truly, one cannot despair when God sends us such teachers.

"But you will wish me away for another four months, if I write you such long notes, so I shall conclude with kind compliments to Mrs. Duffy, and remain, yours very sincerely,

"FRANCESCA ELGEE."

This letter is a convincing proof of the way in which Speranza threw a glamour over the most ordinary things. Of common sense she had not a vestige. When a stone was thrown in Smith O'Brien's face at Limerick, she wrote the following grandiloquent letter to Gavan Duffy:—

"What can be done with such idiots and savages? . . . . . This noble Smith O'Brien who has sacrificed all for the people, and who could gain nothing in return, for no position, however exalted, could add to his dignity, whose life has been a sacrifice to his country, a self-immolation,—and this is the man who has to be guarded by English from Irish murderers! I cannot endure to think of it. We are disgraced for ever before Europe, and justly so. Adieu."

Europe cared little whether a stone was thrown at Smith O'Brien or not, but Speranza viewed the transaction from her own magnifying glasses. According to the advice of Emerson, she "hitched her waggon to a star," she took no heed where the waggon might land her. While she was pouring forth her impassioned verses in *The Nation*, events were thickening rapidly. Revolution was in the air. The first Irish famine was followed by the French Revolution of '48, and then came the arrest of the Young Irelanders, including Gavan Duffy, who was imprisoned. His arrest paralysed the contributors to *The Nation* for the moment. In his "Reminiscences," he says:—

"The writers of the National Journals immediately left town, mostly for Kilkenny, by circuitous routes. A few concealed themselves in Dublin. . . . Martin could no longer bring out his newspaper, Lalor, the leading spirit, was arrested, and the other contributors were in the South, or in concealment. I should have found it equally impossible, but for the generous help of two noble women. Margaret Callan, my cousin and sister-in-law, who had been a contributor from the outset, undertook the editorship, and Miss Elgee (Speranza) promised a leading article suitable to the occasion, and produced one which might be issued from the head-quarters of the national army."[2]

This article, entitled *Jacta alea est* (the die is cast), appeared in *The Nation* for 29th July, 1848, and led to the immediate suppression of the paper by the Government. Anything more violent, more inflammatory, more intemperate, could hardly be imagined. The article is couched in the most high-flown style. There is a sentence about "a hundred thousand muskets glittering brightly in the light of Heaven," though where these muskets were to come from, was a problem not touched upon. During the trial of Gavan Duffy, which was adjourned several times, and finally took place in April, 1849, one great point against him was the publication of this article, along with another, *The Hour of Destiny*, which appeared in *The Nation* of July 22nd, 1848. Both these articles were by Speranza, and both laid the writer open to a charge of high treason. Mr. Butt, in alluding to them, when making his speech for the defence of Gavan Duffy, said—

"I now hold in my hand a letter from the authoress of these articles, assuring me that Mr. Duffy never saw them before they were published, and that he was in prison at the time. I would not be suffered to give pain to the highly-respectable connections of this lady and to herself, by placing her on the table, but I ask the Solicitor-General as a man of honour, and a man of honour I believe him to be—he knows the lady as well as I do—to contradict my statement if it is not true."

No contradiction could be made. It must have been a keen pang to Speranza's generous mind to know that her violent and seditious articles had done so much mischief to her friends. At the conclusion of the trial, Gavan Duffy was released on bail, and his subsequent successful career in Australia is a matter of public interest with which we have nothing to do. Not only did Speranza write poems for *The Nation*, she also wrote prose essays on the French Girondists, on Jean Paul Richter, and on other subjects. These essays were afterwards collected, and published under the title of "Men, Women, and Books." They contain many striking sentences, such as "Walter Scott taught reverence, which is the first step to faith;" "Byron spoke to the want of every young heart. His literature of despair was the anguished cry of a God-bereft humanity, seeking its lost hope and immortality. Byron's mission was to awaken, not to teach. He was the poet of doubt."

Lenette, one of Jean Paul's housewifely German heroines, she compares to "an incarnate sweeping brush, an animated floor-cloth, a living, ubiquitous duster." Of a man who marries an unappreciative wife she says, "He cannot resist the fatal miasma of the common-place, he falls into the dull abyss of mediocrity. We are not proof against any of the daily influences, however trivial, that surround us. . . Let all genius remain unwed."

Another of Speranza's undertakings was to translate from the German a novel called "Sidonia the Sorceress," and a remarkable philosophical work of German fiction, in three volumes, "The First Temptation." In 1851, she exchanged Nationalism for matrimony, and became the wife of Dr. (afterwards Sir William) Wilde, famous as an oculist and also for his antiquarian tastes. He was born at Castlerea, and was ten years older than Speranza. And now began a new phase of her life, as a leader of society. A rather spiteful view of her is given by Miss Henrietta Corkran, in her lately published book, "Celebrities I have Met." She says:—"I called at Merrion Square late in the afternoon, for Lady Wilde never received anyone till 5 p.m., as she hated what she called 'the brutality of strong lights;' the shutters were closed and the lamps had pink shades, though it was full daylight. A very tall woman—she looked over six feet high—she wore that day a long crimson silk gown which swept the floor. The skirt was voluminous, underneath there must have been two crinolines, for when she walked there was a peculiar swaying, swelling movement, like that of a vessel at sea, the sails filled with wind. Over the crimson silk were flounces of Limerick lace, and round what had been a waist, an Oriental scarf, embroidered with gold, was twisted. Her long, massive, handsome face was plastered with white powder. Over her blue-

black glossy hair was a gilt crown of laurels. Her throat was bare, so were her arms, but they were covered with quaint jewellery. On her broad chest was fastened a series of large miniature brooches, evidently family portraits . . . this gave her the appearance of a walking family mausoleum. She wore white kid gloves, held a scent bottle, a lace handkerchief and a fan. Lady Wilde reminded me of a tragedy queen at a suburban theatre."

This is certainly not a flattering portrait, but those who really knew Lady Wilde soon got over her little eccentricities of dress, and learned to value her really fine qualities.

A scheme for the improvement of Ireland—the Small Proprietors' Society — excited her enthusiasm. In her earlier days, she says of it, writing to Gavan Duffy :—

"I read the pamphlet with great interest. If the design can be accomplished, it will make Ireland a garden of the Lord. Nothing so admirable has been yet suggested."

Lady Wilde was always a favourite with the Dublin crowds, who used to cheer her when she was on her way to the Drawingrooms at the Castle. Her husband was knighted in 1864 for his services in connection with the Census, and also for his distinguished ability as a surgeon. He died in 1876, and soon afterwards Lady Wilde left Dublin

for London, and took up her residence at 146 Oakley Street, Chelsea, with her elder son, William, who was then on the staff of the *Daily Telegraph.* Here her literary activity began again. A charming book describing her visit to Denmark and Sweden, with several of her translations from Danish and Norwegian poems, is her "Driftwood from Scandinavia," published by Bentley in 1884, and another work of great interest is "Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland." In the preface she says, "These studies of the Irish past are simply the expression of my love for the beautiful Island that gave me my first inspirations, my quickest intellectual impulses, and the strongest and best sympathies with genius and country, possible to a woman's nature."

Another book, "Ancient Cures of Ireland," was also published, and she was granted a pension of £50 a year from the Civil List in recognition of her services to literature. As she herself remarked, it was a strange coincidence that this pension should come through a Conservative Government.

There is no doubt that as years went on, her political opinions, once so violent, became greatly modified. Her style in writing, too, became less inflated, though in her Scandinavian sketches she does speak of "poor, dyspeptic, nervous, depressed, worn-out, hypochondriacal humanity." This habit

of heaping adjectives on her nouns was characteristic of her. She also speaks "of a vulgar, blinding glare of gas pouring down on the half-asphyxiated guests."

It was in the winter of 1889, that I first made Lady Wilde's acquaintance. I had an invitation to her Saturday "At Homes," and on a dull, muggy, December day I reached the house. The hour on the card said, "From five to seven," and it was past five, when I knocked at the door. The bell was broken. The narrow hall was heaped with cloaks, waterproofs, and umbrellas, and from the door—for the reception rooms were on the ground floor—came a confusing buzz of voices. Anglo-Irish and American-Irish literary people, to say nothing of a sprinkling of brutal Saxons, were crowded as thickly together as sardines in a box. Red-shaded lamps were on the mantelpiece, red curtains veiled doors and windows, and through this darkness visible I looked vainly for the hostess. Where was she? Where was Lady Wilde? Then I saw her—a tall woman, slightly bent with rheumatism, fantastically dressed in a trained black and white checked silk gown; from her head floated long white tulle streamers, mixed with ends of scarlet ribbon. What glorious dark eyes she had! Even then, and she was over sixty, she was a strikingly handsome woman. Though I was a perfect stranger to her, she at once made

me welcome, and introduced me to someone she thought I would like to know. She had the *art de faire un salon*. If anyone was discovered sitting in a corner unnoticed, Lady Wilde was sure to bring up someone to be introduced, and she never failed to speak a few happy words which made the stranger feel at home. She generally prefaced her introductions with some remarks such as "Mr. A., who has written a delightful poem," or "Mrs. B., who is on the staff of the Snapdragon," or "Miss C., whose new novel everyone is talking about." As to her own talk, it was remarkably original, sometimes daring, and always interesting. Her talent for talk was infectious; everyone talked their best. There was tea in the back room, but no one seemed to care about eating or drinking. Some forms of journalism had no attraction for her. "I can't write," I heard her say, "about such things as 'Mrs. Green looked very well in black, and Mrs. Black looked very well in green.'"

A comparison she made on the spur of the moment, "brief as a telegram," seemed to me singularly good.

One afternoon, an elderly gentleman was beginning to monopolise the conversation by descanting on his favourite hobby—the anti-vivisection movement. He droned on and on; we yawned helplessly. Lady Wilde's eagle eye

took in the situation with a glance :—" My dear Mr. So and So," she exclaimed, with one of her most captivating smiles, " excuse me for interrupting you, Miss X——is going to give us a recitation —*The Bishop and the Caterpillar*." *The Bishop and the Caterpillar* proved so amusing that everything else was forgotten, and all went smoothly. No more successful hostess than Lady Wilde could be found, she managed to put people at their ease, and without talking too much herself, she drew out the best in others. What matter that the rooms were small, that the tea was overdrawn, or that there was a large hole in the red curtain that kept out the vulgar light of the day ? Here was a woman who understood the lost art of entertaining, and made her house a centre of light and leading. Thoroughly sympathetic, she entered into the aspirations of everyone who ever held a pen, or touched a paint brush, and those who hailed from the Green Isle of her birth were specially welcome to her.

The last years of her life were clouded by family troubles, into which there is no need to enter here. She died February 3rd, 1896, in the seventieth year of her age.

She was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. It would have seemed more appropriate to have laid her to rest among the glens and hills of her native country that she loved so well. That love

was not, perhaps, shown in the wisest and most practical way, but it was genuine, and in the closing years of her life she probably recognised her mistakes, which, after all, were the mistakes of a generous heart. Her judgment was often wrong, but no one could deny that she was a lover of noble things, that her aims were high, though she failed to see the best means of carrying them out for the real good of her country.

When I was at Oakley Street one day, I asked what time it was, as I wanted to catch a train.

"Does anyone here," asked Lady Wilde, with one of her lofty glances, "know what time it is? We never know in this house about time."

This, it seems to me, was a key to the way in which Lady Wilde looked at things. Trifles, every day trifles, she considered quite beneath her, and yet trifles make up the sum of human life. She had a horror of the "miasma of the commonplace," her eyes were fixed on ideals, on heroes—ancient and modern—and thus she missed much that was lying near her, "close about her feet," in her fervent admiration of the dim, the distant, and the unapproachable. Her failings were the failings of a noble nature, and it is in this light that we must consider her.

XIV.

Julia Kavanagh.

Authoress of "Nathalie," "Adele," &c., &c.

1824-1877.

THERE is no mistake about the name of Kavanagh—it is Irish of the Irish. The Hy-Kavanaghs formed a famous sept, which included kings among it. King Dermot Mac Murrough was a Kavanagh, besides others of lesser note. Coming nearer to our times, one of the most daring exploits of the Indian Mutiny was performed by T. Henry Kavanagh, who, disguised as a native, escaped from the besieged garrison at Lucknow, to carry a message from Sir James Outram to Sir Colin Campbell. For this achievement, which, had it failed, would have meant certain death, Kavanagh received the Victoria Cross, and was the first Civil servant who ever gained such a distinguished honour.

The career of his countrywoman, Julia Kavanagh, was a very different one. She dwelt among un-

trodden paths, and her victories were bloodless ones, gained on the tranquil paths of literature.

She was the only child of Morgan Peter Kavanagh, and was born at Thurles, County Tipperary, in 1824. Her father had literary tastes, and the year she was born he published a poetical romance in ten cantos which died still-born, for, though undoubtedly clever, Morgan Kavanagh did not possess the secret of making his writings popular. Restless and excitable, he soon resolved on leaving his native country. Accompanied by his wife and his daughter, Julia, who was still a child, he went first to London, and then to France. It was this lengthened residence in France at the most impressionable period of her life which enabled Julia Kavanagh to give those vivid and delicate pictures of French country towns, in which she has never been excelled. Now in the quiet seclusion of a convent, now in the brilliant streets of Paris, she gleaned her impressions, and it was soon evident that she must be a writer. In her twentieth year she returned to London, and adopted literature as a profession. In the meantime, her father had not been idle. He had now taken up with the study of language, and in 1844 published a book, "The Discovery of the Science of Language," which was unfavourably reviewed in the *London Literary Gazette*. While he was losing money over his literary ventures, his daughter was gaining it,

and was rapidly coming to the front as a writer. She contributed various tales and essays to the magazines of that day, and her first book, a tale for children, "The Three Paths," came out in 1847, when she was twenty-three.

From a portrait of her in the National Portrait Gallery in Dublin, presented by her mother, we gather some idea of her appearance. Her eyes were real Irish eyes, dark grey, large and brilliant, her hair black; in her face is an expression of melancholy, which seems to tell of many sorrows borne with patience and resignation. Whether she had a romance in her life which turned out unhappily, we do not know, but much in her novels points to this, and her relations with her father must have been of a very unpleasant nature, for he seems to have been as untruthful and undependable as she was truthful and dependable. To her mother she was everything—a support and a stay. A more devoted daughter never breathed, and this affection was mutual. She was patriotic, too. A strong light is thrown on her feelings for her native country, in a letter given by the late Sir Charles Gavan Duffy in his book, "My Life in Two Hemispheres." After his trial in April, '49, which resulted in a disagreement of the jury, Gavan Duffy arrived in London, and proposed reviving *The Nation*, which had been suppressed in Dublin.

"From the beginning," he says, "gifted women

were the best beloved contributors to the *Nation*, and the revived *Nation* was destined to rally recruits of the same class. Julia Kavanagh, who was earning her income by literary work for the English periodicals, offered to aid this new experiment, without payment or applause, by her facile pen."

The letter which is thus described by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy is as follows :—

"SIR —I am not, I confess, a constant reader of the *Nation*. I know it chiefly through the extracts and misrepresentations of the English Press, but these extracts have sufficed to give me as exalted an opinion of your talents as the persecutions you formerly endured gave me of your patriotism. I should not, however, have troubled you with this letter, but, for an extract from the *Nation* given in this day's *Times*, by which I find you suggest a very excellent plan of promoting the Irish cause by means of popular tracts, essays, &c., &c. It occurs to me were this plan to be adopted I might perhaps be of some use. I do not suppose my name is known to you, but I have been a writer for five years. I have published a few books and contributed to *Chamber's Journal*, to their *Miscellany*, to the *Popular Record*, to the *People's Journal*. I am now writing for the journal of Eliza Cook. This, if I have not misunderstood you, is the literature you wish to turn into the channel of nationality. I have always felt that of myself I can do

nothing, but I might be rendered useful, and nothing could give me greater joy. I make this proposal to you in the sincere belief that you will not misunderstand me, or think me guilty of indecorous and unwomanly presumption. I live by my labour and have not much time to spare, but in this cause I will gladly make time and dispense with payment. Nor do I aim in the least at any sort of celebrity which may be connected with this movement. Let my name be known or not, it is a matter of total indifference to me. Let me only be of some use, employed as a common workman, and I am content. I speak somewhat earnestly, but I should not like to forfeit your esteem. I am Irish by origin, birth and feeling, though not by education, but if I have lived far from Ireland, she has still been as the faith and religion of my youth. I have ever been taught to love her with my whole soul, to bless her as a sorrowing mother, dear, though distant and unknown.—I have the honour, sir, to remain yours very sincerely,

"JULIA KAVANAGH."

There is something very touching in this modest and straightforward letter, evidently written under a deep sense of national obligation. As she says, Ireland, though not her permanent home, filled a large place in her affections and her memory. It does not appear if she ever did contribute to the

revived *Nation;* probably not, but Sir Charles Gavan Duffy mentions meeting her in 1855, at a reception given by Mrs. Crowe, author of "The Night-side of Nature," and her friend, Mrs. Loudoun, at which Louis Blanc was present.

"Later in the evening," says Sir Charles, "I met Julia Kavanagh. She is very small, smaller even than Louis Blanc, and, like him, has a good head and fine eyes. She is very much at home on Irish subjects, and told me she is learning Gaelic. She proposed a volume of sketches from Irish History to Colborn and afterwards to Bentley, but neither of them would hear of it. She sent my Small Proprietors' scheme to Wills, of *Household Words*, proposing to make an article on it, but that enlightened economist told her he would not hear of it—he had quite another object in view. He meant that Ireland should be colonised by Englishmen."

At this time, when she was twenty-six, Julia Kavanagh's fame had become well established. She was now a popular authoress. Her well-known story, "Madeleine," founded on the life of a peasant girl of Auvergne, had been followed by "Nathalie," a novel in three volumes, which came out in 1850, and is generally considered her masterpiece.

A volume of biographical sketches, "Women of Christianity," was published in the same year, and "Daisy Burns," another novel, came out soon

afterwards, and was translated into French by Madame H. Loreau, under the title of *Tuteur et Pupille.*

It is by the novel of "Nathalie" that Julia Kavanagh is best known. Here her finished and graphic studies of French life reach their highest perfection. "Nathalie" is one of the best stories of French life ever written in English. The atmosphere is French, the old chateau, with its courtyard and its garden, are faithful pictures, delicately touched by a careful and loving hand. The hero, a man of strong will, of deep but controlled affections, and a strong sense of honour, is too much of the Rochester type in his discourteous self-assertion, but Nathalie herself, impulsive and warm-hearted, is a living woman, and the love between her and her elder sister, Rose, is beautifully sketched.

There are many passages which seem to have been written from Julia Kavanagh's own experience of life, such as the following, when Rose says:—"Nathalie, know this, none, no, none have ever suffered in vain. The silent tears which the lonely night beheld were not in vain; the inward and still unknown strife was not in vain, not even the dream of my youth, or the sorrows of your love, have been in vain. We are linked to one another here below by a chain so fine that mortal eye can never see it, so strong that mortal

strength can never break it. . . . . There are many paths, the goal is one. Some, they are happy, are called upon to struggle for truth and right in the sight of God and man, to endure the weariness, the burning heat of the noonday sun, until the evening's well-earned rest is won at length. . . . . For a third class, whom the Almighty knows as less gifted to act, less fit to soothe the woes and cares of others, another fate is given. This is to pass through life in the vain longing for doing better things, in stagnant quietness when the soul's passion is action, their sacrifice is that of will, and they too have their reward, and enter at last into the end and consummation of all things—God."

Novels fifty years ago were very different to what they are at the present day. Then, writers were free to philosophise as they pleased, and to give forth their own ideas on human life and experience. But now, this would not be tolerated, readers want sensation, variety, movement :—and they would rebel against the long disquisitions that found favour in the fifties, and were, doubtless, copied carefully into the extract books of sentimental young ladies. Julia Kavanagh is specially fond of these reflections. From one in "Sybil's Second Love," which throws a sidelight on her own experience, we may quote the following :—

"What would make you happy now, might make

you wretched ten years hence. Youth is made to wish and dream, and life to deny youth's dreams and wishes. When I was 17, how I would have scorned my present happiness, how I would have annihilated it, if I could! Truly, I may bless Providence that I was denied my will, and compelled to follow a road I hated, no pleasant one, but a path full of briars, and where many a time I stopped, foot-sore and bleeding."

In 1857 a very disagreeable episode occurred in Julia Kavanagh's life. Her father, who still persisted in writing, and had brought out another bulky work on philology—"Myths, Traced to their Primary Source through Language"—now thought fit to trade on his daughter's literary fame. On the title-page of a worthless novel of his, "The Hobbies," he put the name of Julia Kavanagh along with his own. In a letter to the *Athenæum* she indignantly denied any share in it, while the publisher, on his side, maintained that he was under the impression that she had. The truth seems to be that she had seen the novel in manuscript, and had suggested one or two alterations. The correspondence showed that the relations between father and daughter had become very much strained, and that Morgan Kavanagh wished to push his novel into popularity by associating his daughter's name with or without her consent. After this we hear no more of him, and "The

Hobbies," as well as his tough historical romance of the days of the Maccabees, are alike forgotten.

"A Summer and Winter in the two Sicilies" gave Julia Kavanagh's impressions of a lengthened stay in those delightful regions. Volume after volume now followed fast. She was not only a prolific writer, but an industrious reader, as her "French Women of Letters" abundantly proves. While writing these two volumes, she lived in Paris, searching various libraries for information. She gives biographical sketches of Mademoiselle de Scudery, author of the "Grand Cyrus"—a ten-volume romance, which was received with rapture in the seventeenth century——of Madame de Genlis, Madame de Stael, Madame Cottin, author of "The Exiles of Sibera," and other literary celebrities of France. The writing of this book, and of its companion volumes, "English Women of Letters," involved years of study both of French and English literature. Miss Kavanagh was a most conscientious writer, and studied everything at first hand. Another of her popular novels of French life is "Adèle," which was quickly followed by "Beatrice," "Queen Mab" (1863), by "Sybil's Second Love" (1867) by "Dora" (1868), by "Bessie" (1872), and by "John Dorrien" (1875). All these are in three volumes, and nearly all deal with the fortunes of Irish girls brought up in a French atmosphere. Twenty-four works are credited to Julia

Kavanagh's name in the British Museum Catalogue, yet strange to say, not one is to be had in the National Library of Dublin, in the country of the author's birth and of her love. "The Pearl Fountain, and other Fairy Tales," was written in conjunction with her relative, Bridget Kavanagh. For some years before her death, Julia Kavanagh was a valued contributor of short stories to the *Argosy*, then edited by Mrs. Henry Wood, and sub-edited by her son, Mr. Charles W. Wood. These tales were afterwards collected into a volume under the name of "Forget-me-nots," with a preface written by Mr. Wood. He gives in it an account of the death of Julia Kavanagh, which took place at Nice, in the South of France. He says:—"On Sunday, the 28th October, 1877, at five o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Kavanagh heard in the adjoining chamber the noise as of a heavy fall. She immediately rose from her bed, and proceeding to her daughter's room, found her upon the floor. Miss Kavanagh exclaimed in French, the language in which she usually spoke, "Oh, mamma, how silly I am to have fallen!" She was assisted back to her bed, doctors were called in, and by eight o'clock that morning the large beautiful eyes of Julia Kavanagh had closed in their last sleep. An aged mother, so blind as to be only able to distinguish light from darkness, was left to mourn a daughter from whom she had never been separated;

a daughter whose life had been devoted to her mother, to whom she was all in all, in whom had lived as bright and pure a spirit as ever breathed."

The remains of Julia Kavanagh rest in the Catholic Cemetery at Nice. A marble monument, consisting of a small cairn of stones with a cross above, marks the spot. There is a short inscription, and a text in French : " She rests from her labours, and her works do follow her."

Thus died Julia Kavanagh in her fifty-third year, after a life of unremitting literary labour. To one so deeply religious as she was there was no terror in this sudden call. In " Nathalie," the dying girl, Rose, says to her sister—" Oh, why, at any age, is death made so very awful ? Why were the scythe, the skeleton, the grim visage, given as attributes to this gentle deliverer ? I would have him an angel, calm, pitying, and sad, but beautiful, no king of terrors. A deliverer he is, for does he not sever the subtle yet heavy chain which links the spirit to the flesh, life to clay ? Do you remember that passage in the service when, after the Hosanna has been sung, the choir raise their voices and sing *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.* (Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord). From my earliest years those words produced a strange impression on me. As a child, I wondered what glorious messenger from heaven was thus solemnly greeted by those of earth.

I thought of winged angels visiting patriarchs of the desert, of spirits in white robes with diadems made of the eternal stars. Even such a pure messenger is death to me now. He comes, the bearer of glorious tidings, the herald of the Eternal, and I too, say 'Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord!'"